

BELISARIUS.

B Y

M. MARMONTEL,

Member of the French Academy.

*Non miror, si quando impetum capit (DEUS) spec-
tandi Magnos Viros colluctantes cum aliquâ cala-
mitate.*

SENECA DE PROVID.



L O N D O N :

Printed for and Sold by P. VAILLANT, in the
Strand; and by ROBINSON and ROBERTS, in
Pater-noster Row.

MDCCLXVII.

BEELISARIUS

M. M. A. R. M. O. N. T. E. I.

Member of the French Academy

Not a true Frenchman, but a true Frenchman (Ode)



L O N D O N
Printed for and sold by P. V. A. S. in the
 Strand; and by Robinson and Knapton, in
 Pall-mall.

M. M. A. R. M. O. N. T. E. I.

T H E

Translator's Preface.

THE genius of M. Marmontel has been of late so much admired in this kingdom, that a work from his pen could not but attract the most early attention. Belisarius was, therefore, read with eagerness, and the perusal answered so well, that it was immediately resolved to make the pleasure, that had arisen from so elegant a performance, as general as possible, by giving the public a translation. The person, who charged himself with this task, is far from thinking that he has been able to transfuse the spirit of the original into the following version: the beauties of M. Marmontel's style are well known to all competent judges of the French language, and it must be a careful and

iv THE TRANSLATOR'S

a tender hand that endeavours to transplant them. All possible care and tenderness, however, have been used; and the dress, in which Belisarius is here presented to the public, has this at least to boast, that it is not journey-work : it was undertaken *con amore*, with a kind of affection for the various graces of M. Marmontel's performance. The original is a picture which charms with its design and colouring, and however defective the execution of the copy may appear, there was a pleasure in working after so fine a master.

The reader is desired not to consider this little volume as a mere romance, or a modern novel. The vehicle of fiction is, indeed, made use of, but it is in fact *an estimate of the manners and principles of the times*. It is more than that : we have here a review of an interesting period of history, in which the causes that precipitated the
downfall

P R E F A C E.

v

downfall of a great empire are unfolded in a masterly manner, and with such a spirit of political reflection, that, I will venture to say, (and I hope I may say it as free from offence at home, as it is from compliment to the foreign writer) that the gentlemen, who take upon them the care of the nation in our daily papers, may for a while lay down their pens. Faction is here detected, and the governors and governed may find in this piece very seasonable admonitions. It is a work for kings, for ministers, and for the people in general. Belisarius is throughout the whole an amiable and interesting character. He is the friend of civil and religious liberty; he glows with a generous love of human kind, a warrior, a statesman, a man of piety, and an enemy to persecution. Nothing can be more beautifully imagined than the pathetic scenes, which are here introduced; and the sentiments, that animate every

vi THE TRANSLATOR's, &c.

chapter, almost make a Briton envy a writer, who was born and lives under the monarchy of France; a writer who has had the genius and the courage to think with freedom, even in Paris, where we understand, by the last post, that his book is now suppressed. To conclude, the reader will find in this work (to use Mr. Pope's expression) a temperate yet not inconsistent, and a short yet not imperfect system of ethics.

London, March 2,
1767.

P. S. The learned reader will observe that it is in fashion with the most eminent wits of France, when they have occasion to refer to Greek authors, to make their extracts from Latin translations: to that fashion M. Marmontel has conformed throughout the following work.

CONTENTS

THE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I Am aware, and it must not be dissembled, that the fact upon which the following piece is grounded, may be considered rather as a popular opinion, than an historical truth. But that opinion has so universally obtained, and the idea of a blind old man reduced to beggary is now so associated with the name of Belisarius, that the latter never occurs without presenting to the imagination a picture of the former.

In this light, therefore, Belisarius is here represented; in every other particular, I have relied upon the faith of history, and Procopius has been my guide. But my attachment to his authority did not prevail with me to pay any sort of regard to that defamatory Libel, which, under the title of ANECDOTES or SECRET HISTORY, has been attributed to him. On the contrary, it appears to me demonstrable, that such an indigested mass of scandal, falsehood, and detraction, could never be the work of so reputable an historian: the world, I am inclined to think, is indebted for that performance to the pen of some paltry declaimer, whose honesty, and genius, were much upon a level *.

OF

* An advocate of Cæsarea has been supposed to be the author. *Vide Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscriptions & Belles Lettres, tom. xxi.*

Of all the historians, who writ in the same period with Procopius, or who succeeded him during a space of five hundred years, not one has made mention of the *Anecdotes*. Agathias, who was a cotemporary writer, enumerates the compositions of our author, but is totally silent in regard to the work in question. Will it be urged, that it was preserved in a clandestine manner? In the course of three hundred years from the date of it, it is clear, that it might have been brought to light, and published to the world: the learned Photius would certainly have known it, and yet it appears that he never heard of it. Suidas, a writer of the eleventh century, is the first who imputes this despicable satire to Procopius: upon his authority the notion has been adopted, and without ever being put to the test, it has passed current among the learned †. Writers, however, are still extant, by whom the authority of Suidas has been called in question ‡: and there are not wanting those, who, not contenting themselves with doubting the fact, have roundly denied the *Secret History* to be the production of Procopius. Of this number was Eichelius, who gave an edition of the work, with notes and a preface, where his sentiments may be seen at large. He sets out with proving, that it is neither true nor probable that Procopius was the author; and, he adds, though he were, that a declamation so extravagant, so shameless and absurd would be intitled to no sort of credit, but carries with it an antidote to its own poison. The only difficulty that remains with me is, that the illustrious author of the *Spirit of Laws* has given a degree of sanction to the forgery. I know the weight of so respectable

† Vossius, Grotius, &c.

‡ Pere Combesis, La Mothe, &c.

able an authority, but it must yield to the force of evidence. Is it possible to believe, that a writer, who was a statesman in his day, and had the esteem of the age in which he lived, would agree with himself, for the little gratification of traducing his benefactors, to leave behind him a work of defamation, which could not fail to blacken his own memory, by reducing after-ages to the necessity of considering him either as the author of a virulent libel, or a flatterer of the meanest servility? Can it be supposed that he, who had, in every other respect, maintained the dignity of a judicious historian, could of a sudden be so lost to all sense and decency, as to desire, upon his own bare assertion, that the character of a *stupid blockhead, a compound of rusticity and folly* ||, should be fixed upon the emperor Justin, that wise and virtuous old man, who from obscurity, from the lowest station in the army, raised himself by his valour and his talents to the highest rank; obtained the joint suffrages of the senate, the army, and the people, in his favour, and rose at last to the imperial throne? Is it credible that he, who composed the history of his own times in a strain of candour, truth and knowledge, could be capable of transmitting to us concerning Justinian, That he was *stupid and sluggish as an ass, that he suffered himself to be led by the nose, and that he frequently pricked up his ears* *. That he was not a man, but a fury in human shape †. That his mother, before

|| *Insignis homo stoliditatis, summâ cum infantia summâque cum rusticitate conjunctæ.*

* *Nam mirè stolidus fuit, & lento quam simillimus asino, capistro facile trabendus, cui & aures subinde agitantur.*

† *Quod vero non homo, sed, sub humanâ specie, furia sit Justinianus, documento esse possunt ingentia quibus affecit homines mala: quippe enim ex atrocitate facinorum Autoris virium immanitas palam fiat.*

*fore ſhe conceived him, had commerce with a demon that was inviſible, but palpable to the touch †; and, in ſhort, that he brought ſuch a number of calamities upon the empire, as could not be equalled in the annals of all former ages || ? Could an author of reputation, who, in the ſtyle of ſober hiſtory, had repreſented Belifarius as an accompliſhed hero, adorned with triumph and with glory, deſcend ſo lowly from his character as to call him at laſt, a man deſpiſed by the world, and pointed at for a fool * ? and this too in the criſis of that hero's fame, when he was called upon to be the guardian of the ſtate by the expulſion of the Huns ?*

It is true, that in the original Greek, ſome have pretended to trace the ſtyle of Procopius ; but did they diſcern his good ſenſe and manner of thinking ? I will grant that he might be ſuſceptible of ingratitude, and of ſpleen and malice to his benefactors ; but would the rancour of an able writer vent itſelf in boyiſh declamation ? Would he think puerility ſufficient to efface his former ſtrain of panegyric, and to retract the facts upon which that panegyric was founded ? It is not likely that Procopius, the hiſtorian, would ſo trifſe with poſterity, as to ſit down in a fit of malevolence, to prove in form that Juſtinian and his miniſters *were not men, but a ſet of evil demons, who stalked the earth in human ſhape, and heaped deſtruction*

† *Ecce grævida antequam eſſet, quendam genii ſpeciem ad ſe ventitaſſe, quæ non ad viſum, ſed ad contactum ſe præberet, accubaretque ſibi, & quaſi maritus ſe conjugem iniret.*

|| *Is demum fuit Romanis tot tantorumque malorum dator, quod & quanta audita non ſunt ex omni ſuperiorum ætatum memoriâ.*

* *Tunc enim verò contemni ab omnibus & veluti demens ſubſumari.*

tion upon mankind †. Of such a degree of infatuation I should be almost inclined to acquit him, though all his contemporaries were to depose against him: most assuredly I shall do so now, when there is no other evidence but the *Dictum* of a single man who lived five hundred years afterwards.

It is Procopius the historian, and not the supposed writer of scandalous memoirs, that I have followed: I have consulted him in his genuine work, and from thence I have copied the character of my hero, his modesty, his benevolence, his affability, the simplicity of his manners, his beneficence, and, above all, that fund of humanity which was the basis of his virtues, and made him the idol of the people. “It was the delight,” says my author ‡, “of the citizens of Byzantium, “to behold Belisarius coming forth every morning to the Forum. He was distinguished “by the size and the graceful proportions of his “stature. To the dignity of his person he added “such an air of meekness, benignity, and cheerful demeanour to all who came in his way, “that he might have passed for one of the ordinary

† *Hi nunquam homines (mibi) visi sunt sed perniciosi demones. Humanas induti formas, quasi semi homines furiae, sic universum terrarum orbem convulserunt.*

‡ *Erat igitur Bisantinis civibus voluptati Belisarium intueri in forum quotidie prodeuntem. Pulchritudo hunc magnitudoque corporis honestabat. Humilem praeterea se, benignumque aded, atque aditu obvium quibusque perfacilem exhibebat, ut infimae sortis viro persimilis videretur. In suos praecipue milites munificentiam ceteros anteibat. Erga agricultores, agrestesque homines, tanta hic indulgentia ac providentia utebatur, ut Belisario ductante exercitu, nullam hi vim paterentur. Segetes insuper, dum in agris maturescerent, diligentius tuebatur, ne forte equorum greges has devastarent; frugesque ceteras, inuitis dominis, suos attingere prohibebat. Proc, De Bell, Goth, lib. iii,*

xii THE AUTHOR's, &c.

" nary rank of people. . . . His munificence
 " to his soldiers was unbounded. . . . To the
 " husbandman and the labourer of the field he
 " behaved with such a tender concern, that while
 " he commanded, they were sure of suffering no
 " kind of outrage from the army. His care,
 " moreover, extended to all the fruits of the earth:
 " he provided with solicitude that his troopers
 " should not trample down the corn growing up
 " in the field ; and to touch any part of the far-
 " mer's store, without leave from the owner, was
 " made penal throughout his army."



BELISA-



BELISARIUS.

CHAP. I.

TOWARDS the close of Justinian's reign, when that emperor began to droop with age, the state, exhausted by long and violent exertions, discovered every symptom of decay. The administration through all its departments was enfeebled; the authority of the laws was silent; the public treasure was abandoned to private avarice; and military discipline lay quite neglected. Fatigued by a continued series of wars, the emperor was reduced to be a purchaser of peace at the hands of his enemies; while the scanty remainder of his armies languished in a state of indolence, as if grown useless, and a burthen to the government. The commanders of the inactive soldiery gave them-

B

selves

selves up to pleasure and dissipation; and the exercise of the chace, which recalled to their minds a faint image of war, was their only expedient to prevent the weariness of too deep a repose, and the languor of a listless condition.

It happened, after the sports of hunting were over, that a party was engaged at supper in a castle situated in the territories of Thrace, when word was brought that a blind old man, conducted by a child, implored the company for shelter and hospitality. Youth is prone to compassion, and the old man was admitted. It was now the autumnal season, and the cold, which began to be somewhat eager, had chilled the poor venerable stranger. They gave him a seat near the fire.

The pleasures of the table went on; convivial mirth diffused itself, and the misfortunes of the state became at length the topic of conversation. A wide field was opened for censure to expatiate in, and discontented vanity allowed itself every liberty of speech. Each individual was lavish in commendation of the exploits he had performed, and those he would have performed, if his merit and his talents had not been neglected and depressed. The calamities of the empire, according to them, could only be ascribed to the egregious blunder of not confiding the places of
highest

highest trust to men of their stamp and character. They governed the world over their bottle, and with every bumper the spirit of legislation grew more enlightened and decisive.

The old man at the corner of the fire listened to this club of politicians, and pity mingled with his smiles. One of the company perceiving it, Honest man, says he, you seem to find something pleasant in our discourse.---Pleasant! replied the aged guest; pardon me, Sir, not very pleasant, but light and airy, as may be expected at your time of life. The whole room was astonished at the answer. Your complaints, you think well founded, continued the old man, and I agree with you, that you ought not to have fallen into neglect; but that is a mere partial evil, not to be lamented. Lament rather that the empire has lost all its strength and dignity; and that the prince, worn out with cares, and bending under the weight of years, no longer now can see and judge for himself, but is obliged to act by the ministry of unfaithful servants. In so general a disaster, it is poor to think only of yourselves.---That was the fashion of your time, I fancy, interposes one at the table; no body cared about himself in those days! However, the mode is altered now, and every man for himself at present. So much the worse, returned the old man;

4 B E L I S A R I U S.

and if that be the case, you are properly requited; neglect ought to be your portion. How! said the person to whom these words were addressed, do you encroach upon our hospitality, in order to insult us? Far from it, answered the old man; I deal with you as a friend, and pay you with honest truth for the shelter you afford me.

The young Tiberius, who since merited to be ranked among the virtuous emperors, happened to be of the party. He was struck with the venerable air and snowy head of the blind old guest. Addressing himself to him, There is, said he, a mark of wisdom in your observation, but it is mixed with a degree of spleen; and this public spirit, which you require, is without doubt a virtue, but by no means a duty. --In your station it is a duty, replied the good old man, in a tone somewhat peremptory; or, said he, to express it better, it is the basis of your duty, the foundation of every military virtue. Whoever dedicates himself to the service of his country, should consider his country as insolvent; for, in fact, that which he devotes to the common good is above all price. He should, moreover, be prepared to meet with ingratitude from his country; for if the sacrifice he makes does not spring from generous motives, the part he acts is foolish and absurd. The only true principles of
action

action are the love of glory, and the ardor, the enthusiasm of virtue. Actuated by these incentives, of what moment is it how our services are received? The recompence of true virtue does not depend upon the caprice of a minister, or the discernment of the prince. The common soldier, indeed, may be induced by the hopes of booty; he may hazard his life for a pittance to maintain it. This I readily comprehend; but you, Sir, born to affluence, with whom to live is to enjoy, when you relinquish the softer scenes of life to undergo fatigue and labour, opposing yourself voluntarily to various perils, can you derogate so far from the generous act, as to desire wages for it? It is depreciated by payment: who attends to the advantage of salary, is a mercenary slave; nor is the case altered by the quantity of reward; the man who appraises his talents, and converts them to profit, is to the full as venal as the soul that sells itself for a piece of money. What I have said of pecuniary recompence, I affirm also of the allurements of ambition: honours, titles, rank, and the favours of the sovereign, what are they but wages? He who desires them has his hire. We must either give or sell ourselves: there is no other alternative. The former is the act of freedom, the latter of slavery: you, gentlemen, will incline to that which agrees.

6 BELISARIUS.

best with the propensities of your hearts.—At this rate, honest friend, said the company, you place sovereigns in a very easy condition.—Were my discourse addressed to sovereigns, returned the blind stranger, I should tell them, that as it is your duty to observe a disinterested conduct, so it is theirs to be just and upright.—What, then, is it just, do you think, to give merit its due recompence?—Most certainly it is; but he to whom service is rendered, is to dispense the reward; and if he omits to do it, it is his misfortune. But to go a little farther: which of us, in weighing our own merits, can be sure of holding the balance with an even hand? To illustrate this, in your condition, for instance, in order that every body should be dealt with to his satisfaction, it would be necessary that each should command in chief, and then what becomes of subordination? This, you see, is impracticable. Let me then assume it as a truth, that government may incidentally want penetration, and even equity; but still it will be more discerning and wise in its appointments, than if it were implicitly to take the recommendation each of you would give in favour of himself.—And who are you that talk to us in this strain, says the young master of the feast, with an elevation of voice?—Belisarius, replied the old man.

The

The surprize occasioned by this discovery need not be expressed: the astonishment and confusion that seized their young minds at the name of Belisarius, at the name of him who had so often conquered in three parts of the globe, will suggest themselves to every imagination. The whole company remained motionless, and a deep silence marked the respect with which they were impressed. Reverential awe possessed them, and, forgetting that Belisarius was blind, not one of them dared to lift his eyes. Tiberius at length broke silence: Thou venerable man, said he, how unjust and cruel has fortune been to thee!—to thee, whom the whole empire, for thirty years together, felt the author of its glory and its flourishing condition; till at length wicked malice framed a charge of treason and revolt!—Thou art that hero, whom the persecuting rage of envious men loaded with irons, and barbarously deprived of the organs of sight!—And yet, thus basely treated, you can still persevere to inculcate the principles of public spirit and disinterested love of country!—And from whom, says Belisarius, would you expect to hear the lessons of virtue? Are the slaves of court-favour to be your moralists?—Oh! shame indelible! says Tiberius, interrupting him; unparalleled ingratitude! Posterity will scarce believe the monstrous story!

—It must not be dissembled, replied Belisarius, that my enemies did take me unprovided, and surprise me a little : I never expected to be injured to that excess of outrage. I had, however, been familiar with the idea of dying in the service of the empire ; and whether dead or blind, the difference is inconsiderable. Devoted to my country, I did not except my eyes. All that I hold dearer than my eyes or my life still remains to me ; the honour of my character is inviolate, and, above all, the virtues of my heart are still mine, unconquered by my enemies. The actions of my life may indeed be effaced from the memory of a court ; but the memory of mankind will be more retentive ; and if it should not, I have the conscious remembrance, and that is sufficient.

The company now, struck with admiration, solicited Belisarius to make one at the table. Excuse me, gentlemen, says he, at my age the best place is the fire-side. Every civility was tendered to him, and he was much importuned to accept the best bed in the castle : he contented himself with a little straw. I have often slept harder, says he : but this child, who guides me, I recommend to your good offices ; for he is more delicate than I am.

The next morning, as soon as there was light enough for his guide, Belisarius departed

parted, before his hosts, fatigued with the sport of the preceding day, were yet awake. Being informed when they rose, that the hero had left the place, they proposed to go in quest of him, in order to provide him with a carriage, and what other conveniences he might want. No, says Tiberius, that will be labour in vain; Belisarius has not conceived esteem enough for us, to make him willing to receive an obligation.

The young Tiberius had sensibility and reflection; on his mind an exalted virtue in the very extreme of misfortune made the deepest impression. Never, says he to one of his friends who came to him from the emperor, never shall I forget last night's solemn scene! never shall the words of the venerable man be erased from my memory. Humiliating as he was, yet his lesson has taught me what a task remains upon my hands, if I aspire to the dignity of my nature; if I mean to be a man. An account of this incident reached the ear of JUSTINIAN, who desired an interview with TIBERIUS.

TIBERIUS related the whole with accuracy to the emperor, and then continued he, It is impossible, Sir, that so elevated a mind could descend to the baseness of the conspiracy laid to his charge: I would engage my life that he is innocent, if a life like mine were worthy of being surety for so illustrious a character. I will see him,

and confer with him, replied JUSTINIAN, without disclosing myself to him : in the condition of blindness, to which he is reduced, this will not be impracticable. Since his release from prison, he cannot have removed himself to any considerable distance : pursue his steps, and intice him, if possible, to your country-seat ; thither I will come in private. This command of the emperor Tiberius received with transport, and the next day pursued the road Belisarius had taken.

C H A P. II.

BELISARIUS, in the mean time, begging alms as he went, journeyed on towards an old ruinous castle, where his family expected him. He had given directions to his young guide, not to mention his name on the road ; but the dignified air of his countenance, and his whole person, was sufficient to interest every beholder. Arriving that night at a village, his conductor stopped at the door of an house which had a simple but neat appearance.

The landlord was entering with a spade in his hand : the mien and features of Belisarius attracted his attention, and made him curious to know so respectable a vagrant.

B E L I S A R I U S. 11

grant. A poor invalid, says Belisarius, an old decrepit soldier!—A soldier! exclaims the villager, and that honour is your recompense!—There is no help for it, replied Belisarius; the greatest misfortune of a sovereign is his inability to pay the price of all the blood spilt in his service. The heart of the villager was touched by this answer, and Belisarius was invited to partake of his hospitality.

I here introduce, says the master of the house to his wife, a gallant brave veteran, who bears the severities of his fate with fortitude of mind: then turning to Belisarius, My honest guest, be not ashamed of your condition in a family which has been inured to misfortunes: sit you down, we are going to supper; while we wait to have it laid upon the table, tell me, pray, what wars have you served in? In the wars of Italy, says Belisarius, against the Goths, that in Asia against the Persians, and in Africa against the Vandals and the Moors.

At these words the villager could not suppress a deep sigh. At this rate then, continued he, you made every campaign with Belisarius?—Yes, every campaign; we were never asunder.—Indeed! that excellent man! the equal composure of his mind! that constant uprightness! that greatness of soul! Is he still living, pray? for in this solitude it is about five and twenty

B 6 years.

years since I have heard what is doing in the world.—Yes, Belisarius is still alive.—May Heaven guard and prolong his days!—If he heard your wishes for him, your goodness would affect him tenderly.—Very like; and how do they say he fares at court? In great power, to be sure! adored by every body!—Alas! envy is ever an attendant on prosperity.—Very true; but the emperor should be upon his guard against the enemies of so great a man, the tutelary genius, the protector of the empire!—He is far gone in years now.—But what then? he will be as great in council, as he was formerly in the field. His wisdom, if he is attended to, may, perhaps, be of more extensive use than even his valour.—And how, says Belisarius, inwardly softened, how was he known to you?—Let us sit down to table, answered the villager: your question would lead into a long detail.

Belisarius now felt some secret hints that his landlord must be some officer who had formerly served under him, and had reason to be contented with his general. During supper, the latter was inquisitive concerning the events of war in Italy and the East, but was totally silent in regard to Africa. Belisarius gratified his curiosity in a plain and simple stile. Let us drink, says the host, at the conclusion of the repast, let us drink

drink to the health of your general, and may Heaven requite him with its bounty for all the evil he heaped on me!—He replied Belisarius, did he injure you?—He discharged his duty, and I make no complaint. I have learned in the school of adversity to compassionate the distresses of mankind, and you shall know, my honest friend, how that lesson was taught me. As you have served in Africa, you must have seen the king of the Vandals, the unfortunate GILIMER, led by Belisarius in triumph to Constantinople, with his wife and children involved in his captivity. That very GILIMER has opened to you his hospitable door! you have supped with him!—Thou Gilimer! exclaimed Belisarius; and has not the emperor assigned you a better lot?—He had promised—Yes, he promised, and, to do him justice, he kept his word. Dignities were offered to me, and even the rank of a Patrician; but I declined the offer. To him who has been a king and has lost his crown, the only resource is obscurity and repose.—Thou GILIMER!—Yes, I am he! that vanquished prince, who, you may remember, was besieged upon the mountain of *Papua*. There I suffered unheard of hardships*: the inclemency of the winter-season, the necessities of famine, the miserable aspect of a whole

* *Vide Procop. de Bello Vandalico, lib. II.*

whole people driven to the last despair, and ready to devour their very wives and children; the unremitting vigilance of that brave officer PHARAS, who, even amidst the operations of the siege he carried on, never ceased by his remonstrances to awaken my feelings both for myself and the miseries of my people: all these circumstances, together with the entire confidence I had in the uprightness of your general, prevailed upon me at length to lay down my arms. With what an air of sober dignity did Belisarius receive me! Every proper attention was paid to me by his direction. With what address, with what respect did he strive to soften my affliction! The space of near six lustres has elapsed, since I have dwelt in this solitary retreat, and not a day has passed without hearing my most fervent prayers for Belisarius.

I perceive, said Belisarius, in this account of yourself, the mild effects of that philosophy, which even on the mountain, where you endured so much, could make you chant your calamities in song; which gave you, when you appeared before Belisarius, that serenity of contempt; and on his day of triumph animated that look of magnanimity, which astonished the emperor Justinian. My good guest, replied Gilimer, the strength and the weakness of our minds depend entirely upon the light in which things;

things appear to us. True constancy and fortitude first sprung up in my heart, when I began to consider the world as the sport of fortune. Till then I had lived the most voluptuous of kings, dissolved in luxury, and ever intranced in the lap of pleasure : on a sudden I passed from my palace, that scene of revelry and delight, to the cavern of the Moors*, where pillowed upon straw, I lived on barley coarsely pounded and half roasted under the cinders. Nay, to such hardship was I reduced, that a loaf of bread, sent to me by the humanity of an enemy, was an inestimable present. From this situation I fell into captivity, was loaded with irons, and walked in the conqueror's triumph. In extremities like these, you will agree with me, that the heart must break with grief, or rise superior to the caprice of fortune.

You find in that composure of your soul, says Belisarius, many resources against calamity ; and I promise to superadd a new motive of consolation before we part.

Their conversation ended here, and each retired to rest.

Gilimer, at the dawn of day, instead of betaking himself to the cultivation of his garden, made it his first care to enquire how his

* *Vandali namque omnium sunt, quos sciam, mollissimi atque delicatissimi ; omnium vero miserrimi Maurisii.*

Procop. ibidem.

his aged guest had passed the night. He found him already up, with his stick in his hand, ready to set out on his journey. How ! said he, not give us a few days before you leave us !—That, replied Belisarius, is not in my power : I have a wife and daughter inconsolable during my absence. Farewel ! and hear without emotion what remains to be told you : Blind and superannuated as I am, BELISARIUS will never forget the reception you have given him. — How ! BELISARIUS ! — It is BELISARIUS who now embraces you ! — Righteous Heaven ! exclaims GILIMER, half wild with astonishment, BELISARIUS blind, and abandoned in his old age ! — Even so, replied BELISARIUS, and to shew you the extreme of cruelty, before they turned him adrift to beg his way through the world, his enemies put out his eyes. — Amazement ! says Gilimer, in a tone of grief and horror ; can it be possible ? Who were the monsters ? — Envious men, replied BELISARIUS ; they impeached me of designs upon the crown, when my thoughts were fixed upon my grave. They had credit enough to ruin me, and I was laid in irons. The people at length clamoured loudly for my enlargement ; it was in vain to resist the popular outcry ; but in restoring me to liberty they deprived me of my sight. JUSTINIAN too ordained it ; there

there the wound struck deeper ! You can witness with what zeal, with what affection I served him. Even now I love him, and grieve that he is surrounded by wicked men, who cloud and blacken the evening of his days. When I heard that he himself pronounced the definitive sentence, I own my constancy failed me ; the very executioners relented into pity, and fell prostrate at my feet. Now all is over ; and, thanks be to Heaven, I have but a little time to crawl about, blind and wretched. — Pass that time with me, says GILIMER : here, under my roof, close an illustrious life. — That, returned Belisarius, would have something soothing in it ; but I must give myself to my family, and I now go to expire in their arms. Farewel !

Gilimer embraced him, bathed him with his tears, and could hardly quit his hold. At length he let him go with a parting pang, and straining his eyes after him, O prosperity ! says he, thou cheat prosperity ! who can confide in thee ? The warlike hero, the great, the good Belisarius ! — Now indeed he may think himself happy who digs his garden. With these words the king of the Vandals resumed his spade.

C H A P. III.

BELISARIUS was now near the asylum of his family, who expected him with impatience, when a new incident made him fear that he should never reach it. The inhabitants upon the borders of the empire were perpetually making incursions into Thrace. A party of Bulgarians had invaded the confines, just as a rumour was spread abroad, that BELISARIUS, deprived of his eye-sight, was discharged from prison, and was begging his way to his exiled family. The idea of attaching to himself so considerable a man soon struck the prince of Bulgaria, who little doubted but BELISARIUS would embrace the most rapid means of revenge. The road he had taken was known, and orders were accordingly issued for a diligent pursuit. Towards the close of day BELISARIUS was overtaken : force was not to be resisted ; he was obliged to mount a superb horse brought for the purpose. Two Bulgarians conducted him, and the hero's guide was obliged to mount behind one of them. You may trust to us, said the Bulgarians ; the prince our master honours your virtues and compassionates your misfortunes. BELISARIUS interrogating what their prince wanted with him ; He means, replied.

replied the barbarians, to sate your vengeance with the blood of your enemies. Ah! says the old general, let him leave me unrevenged; his pity is superfluous and cruel. I only ask to die in the arms of my family, and you tear me from them. Whither would you lead me? I am harrassed with fatigue, and rest is necessary to me. Rest you shall have, answered the Bulgarians, and to your entire satisfaction, if the master of the neighbouring castle should chance not to be upon his guard, or in case he does not prove armed with too strong a force.

This castle was in the occupation of an old courtier whose name was BESSUS. He had commanded at Rome during a siege, and after being guilty of the most horrible exactions, retired to this place with ten thousand talents*. BELISARIUS had insisted that he should be prosecuted with the utmost severity of the law; but those at court who do not wish to have matters too closely inspected, being all of his party, the enquiry was prevented, and BESSUS retired to enjoy his crimes and his money in rural tranquility.

Two Bulgarians, who had been dispatched to reconnoitre the place, reported to the chief, that in the castle all was pleasure and rejoicing; that the misfortune of BELISARIUS

SARIUS

* About 250,000 l. sterling.

SARIUS was the general talk ; and that Bessus celebrated it by a day of festivity, as a punishment inflicted by Heaven. The abject wretch ! said the Bulgarians, he shall not long have it in his power to triumph in the downfall of a great man like you.

They arrived soon at the castle : Bessus was at table surrounded by his sycophants, one of whom sung a song of adulation, and in his stanzas set forth the care of Heaven in the justification of his patron, by punishing the accuser with the loss of his sight. What more manifest indication could there be ! Could innocence enjoy a more splendid triumph ! Bessus applauded the flattering strain, graciously observing, that Heaven is always just, and that sooner or later the wicked are brought to condign punishment. Bessus was right in his observation ; for now the Bulgarians, sword in hand, had taken possession of the court-yard, and leaving Belisarius to the care of a few soldiers, made their way with hideous uproar to the banqueting-room. Bessus turned pale at the sight ; confusion and terror fell upon him ; his guests were thrown into the utmost consternation : without attempting a defence, they fell upon their knees and begged their lives. They were all instantly seized, and dragged forth to the place where BELISARIUS was guarded. Bessus by the light of the torches perceived on horseback a blind old

old man ; he immediately knew him, and beseeched his mercy. The old general, softened with tenderness, conjured the Bulgarians to spare him and his. No, said the chief, no mercy here for bad men ! This was the signal for slaughter, and Bessus with all his comrades was put to death upon the spot. Then ordering all the domestics before him, the commander of the gang, who saw they expected the same fate, bid them be without fear, and attend him and his party at table ; for now," says he we are your masters. He proceeded to regale himself with his followers, and BELISARIUS was placed in the seat of Bessus.

The vicissitudes of fortune now engrossed the thoughts of Belisarius, and this last incident sorely grieved him. My friends, said he to the Bulgarians, you distress me much by shedding the blood of my countrymen. Bessus, it is true, was guilty of avarice and inhumanity : I have seen him the author of a famine at Rome, and in the midst of the public misery selling out bread at a most exorbitant price, without any feeling for the poor, who were unable to buy the necessaries of life. The justice of Heaven has overtaken him at last, and my only regret is that he merited his fate : but yet this havoc, done in my name, is a stain to my honour. Either dispatch me, or promise that no outrage of this sort shall happen

pen again while I am amongst you. The Bulgarians engaged to restrain themselves for the future to self-defence ; but Bessus' castle was plundered, and the next day the invaders, loaded with booty, set forward with BELISARIUS.

As soon as they arrived at their prince's camp, the commander in chief, embracing Belisarius, exclaimed, in a transport of joy, Come, thou venerable man, and try whether we or your own countrymen are the Barbarians ! Abandoned by the state you served, you shall find among us both friends and revengers of your wrongs. With this he led him by the hand to his tent, there bad him repose himself, and gave orders that every thing should favour his slumber. At night, after a sumptuous repast, at which the name of Belisarius was celebrated by all the Barbarian chiefs, the king withdrew with him to a private conference. He began by observing, that it was needless to remonstrate the cruelty of the treatment he had met with. The crime, continued he, is horrible ; the vengeance due to it should be the same. Your tyrant, with all his accomplices, must be buried under the ruins of the Imperial throne and palace : his city shall be wrapt in flames, and its fragments heaped upon the emperor's head. Be thou, illustrious old man, be thou the guide of my armies ; in-

struct

Instruct me how to conquer, and to expiate
 your injuries. They have not robbed you
 of the mind's eye; the light of wisdom is
 still yours. Teach me how to rush upon
 them by surprize; to assault them within
 their ramparts. Let us exterminate their
 empire, and not leave a trace of it on this
 side of the seas. If the second rank in our
 new dominion will not suffice you, divide
 with me the Imperial dignity; I agree to
 it. Let the tyrant of Byzantium, before
 he dies beneath repeated blows, behold you
 once more make your triumphant entry into
 his city. — And would you have me, then,
 said Belisarius, after a pause, would you have
 me justify him for depriving me of my
 sight? It is a long time, Sir, since I de-
 clined the offer of crowns. Carthage and
 Italy invited my acceptance. I was then
 young, and in the season of ambition;
 persecution even then began to shew itself,
 but I remained inviolably faithful to my
 prince and my country. The duty which
 then bound me continues unextinguished;
 and nothing can induce me to renounce it.
 When I promised allegiance to the empe-
 ror, I hoped to find him just; and, if he
 proved otherwise, I made no reservation of
 a tacit right to defend, much less to re-
 venge myself. Of treason and revolt I am
 incapable; and, let me ask, how would it
 serve you to brand me with perjury?

What

What valuable service can you expect from a blind old man, who has lost the force and vigour of his mind? The enterprize you propose is much above my ability, perhaps above your own. In the present relaxed state of government, the emperor appears an easy conquest; but he is only grown indolent; and perhaps to rouse him from his languor, and re-animate his spirit, it were desirable for him that an enterprize like yours should be commenced. That city, which you think so assailable, is inhabited by a people trained to war: and then, what a set of men to lead them on! If the superannuated Belisarius may well nigh be numbered with the dead, yet NARSES lives, and even NARSES has for competitors MUNDUS, HERMES, SALOMON, and many others of a warlike genius. If you will credit me, time alone, with its imperceptible hand, must sap the foundations, and work the downfall of that great empire. You may, indeed, commit a ravage, but that is but the war of robbers; your ambition will aspire to an enterprize more worthy of you. Justinian desires only to form alliances and confederacies in friendship; let me add, there is not a king who would not be honoured by an alliance with him; and, Sir, it depends upon yourself to—No, interrupted the Bulgarian, I never will be the friend of Justinian; I will

will hold no alliance with the man who owes his all to you, and in return has blinded you for it. Will you reign in concert with me, the director of my councils, and the genius of my armies? That is the question between us. My life, replied Belisarius, is in your hands; but nothing can exempt me from the allegiance I owe my lawful sovereign; even now, depressed as I am, had I the means of serving him, though it were against yourself, he might still be as sure of me as in my day of prosperity.—An extraordinary sort of virtue this! says the Bulgarian.—Woe to the people, replied Belisarius, to whom it appears extraordinary! Don't you perceive that it is the foundation of good order in society? That no member of any community whatever should arrogate to himself a right to be his own judge and his own avenger, is an obvious, a self-evident truth. That right of nature is transferred to the magistrate; and were it otherwise, there would be as many rebels as discontented spirits. Would you, who now court me to punish my master for injustice, would you give the same privilege to your own soldiers?—Would I give it? says the Bulgarian; they have it without my giving it; but fear restrains it within due bounds.—And with us, sir, virtue is the restraint, says Belisarius; that is an advantage resulting from the manners; from

manners formed by civilization, the parent of social happiness ; and social happiness, let me tell you, will never be rightly understood, where the institutions of true policy have not been received. I will go deeper into this subject, with the freedom of a man who has nothing left to fear or hope. What sort of subjects do you govern, sir ? A race enured to warfare ; that is their best resource : and that very warfare to which they are trained banishes every idea of the right use of peace ; inclines them to neglect the valuable riches of labour and industry ; to trample on the laws of natural justice, and seek a precarious good in ruin and destruction. If you will place before your eyes the consequences that must attend your boundless ambition, you will perceive how necessarily it results, that, to lay waste the territories of the empire, you must leave your own without labourers, barren and uncultivated ; that in order to subsist one part of the human species, you must massacre another ; and that your own subjects must fatten with their blood the very land which they cover with desolation. And will not, said the king, the influence of war be the same upon the subjects of the empire ? By no means, replied Belisarius ; and moreover the object of our arms is very different. The end aimed at by our wars is public tranquility, that we may enjoy

joy the fruits of peace as the purchase of our victories. Generosity, says the Bulgarian, is easily extended where we have the superior force. Let us break off the conference. You are still illustrious in misery, and I honour your unshaken fidelity; it deserved a better recompence. Repose yourself for this night in my own tent: you shall be lodged near our person. To-morrow it shall depend upon yourself to direct your guides which way you will be conducted. To the place where they seized me, said Belisarius; and then retired to the comforts of a pure and tranquil sleep.

The next day the king of Bulgaria took leave of the good old general, and fain would have loaded him with presents. They are, says Belisarius, the spoils of my country, and you would blush for me, if I suffered myself to be so enriched. Some necessary food for himself and his guide was all he could be induced to accept; and the same party that laid violent hands upon him, escorted him to the place from whence he had been carried to the barbarian camp.

CHAP. IV.

THE hero was now at the distance of twelve miles from the retreat of his family ; but being exhausted by a fatiguing journey, he enquired of his guide whether there was not a village in sight, where he might rest his wearied limbs. There is one, said his young conductor, but it is a considerable way off. Let these guards convey you to it. No, replied BELISARIUS, I should expose the place to the pillage of these rovers. He now took leave of his convoy.

Arriving at the village, the cry that struck his ear was, *There he is ; that's he ; it is the very man.* What may this mean ?—It is an whole family, said the guide, making towards you with great eagerness. By this time an old man came forward from the crowd. Worthy gentleman, said he, may we crave to know who you are ? You plainly see, replied Belisarius, that I am a poor indigent wretch, and not a gentleman.—An indigent wretch ! exclaimed the peasant ; that is what occasions our curiosity ; for we have a report here, that, wretched as you seem, you are Belisarius.—Lower your voice, my honest friend, replied the general ; and if my misfortunes touch

touch you, afford me a shelter under your roof. These words were scarcely uttered, when he felt the villager embracing his knees: he raised the honest countryman, and went with him into an humble cot.

Fall down, my children, said the villager to his son and two daughters, fall down at the feet of this illustrious hero: it was he protected us from the ravage of the Huns; but for him our little habitation had been reduced to ashes; but for him, my children, your father would have been butchered before your eyes, your little babes would have been torn from you, and hurried into captivity; but for him, you never would have raised your heads again; you are indebted to him for life, and all that can be dearer than life. Venerate him the more for his present condition, respect his misfortunes, and weep over your unhappy country.

Belisarius, dissolving inwardly with tenderness at the grateful sentiments of this little family, and overpowered by their blessings on his head, could only answer them with the dumb eloquence of his embraces. Condescend, illustrious hero, said the two women, to receive to your arms these two little innocents, who have found in you a second father. We shall never cease to awaken in their memories a due sense of the honour they will now receive by salut-

ing their great deliverer, and being caressed in his embrace. Each mother presented her own child, and placed him on the general's knees. The little infants smiled with young astonishment, and raising their arms seemed to offer up their thanks. And can you now, said Belisarius, think me an object of compassion? Does there at this moment breathe a man more sincerely happy than myself? But tell me, how has it happened that you had any knowledge of me? A young nobleman, replied the villager, passed through this place yesterday, and enquired if we had not seen a blind old man go by; you answer the description he gave us. We assured him we had seen no such person; he then charged us to keep a good look-out, and let you know, that a friend expects you at the place where you are going. He said you were in want of every thing, and requested us to pay you every attention in our power: he even promised to requite us for it. Alas! we told him that we were all variously employed; some in the labours of the field, others in domestic cares, and had but little leisure to gape after travellers as they pass by. Then quit your employments, said the young lord, and omit every thing rather than the acts of benevolence the good old man is intitled to: he is your protector, your deliverer; it is Belisarius whom

whom I recommend to your diligence ; and then he opened to us the whole story of your sufferings. At the sound of a name so beloved and honoured, imagine to yourself the agitation of our hearts. My son watched all night long for his general, for he had the honour to fight under your banners, when you expelled the invaders of Thrace ; and my daughters at the dawn of day were at the threshold of the door, and there continued straining their eyes with eager expectation. At length we have found you ; command as you please, every thing we have is yours : the nobleman who desires to see you has more in his power to give ; but give what he may, he will not do it with a better heart than we offer our little all.

While thus the father discoursed, the son, in a fixed attitude before the hero, viewed him with a pensive air, his hands clasped in each other ; consternation, pity, and respect rising by turns, and diffusing themselves over his countenance.

My good friend, says Belisarius to the old villager, I thank you for these marks of your goodness. I have wherewithal to support me on my way to my last retreat : but pray inform me, is your happiness equal to your benevolence ? Your son, you say, carried arms under my conduct. I feel myself interested about him ; is he prudent, careful, and industrious ? Does he prove a

good husband and a good father?—He is, replied the old man, all my joy and comfort; he quitted the army upon the death of his elder brother; but he quitted it seamed with honourable scars; he relieves me from labour, the prop of my old age! He has for his wife the daughter of my friend, and Heaven has smiled upon their union. He is of a sanguine lively temper; she is of a mild and amiable disposition. My daughter, who stands there, is also happily settled. I gave her in marriage to a young man of good morals, and they live in mutual affection: every thing goes on to my heart's content, and they have raised grand-children to me, in whom I fancy I am renewing my youth. In the hopes that they will cherish my memory, and bless me when I am gone, I draw towards my grave with less regret.—Alas! my good friend, said Belisarius, you excite my envy! I had two sons, my best, my darling hope! I saw them both expire at my side; an only daughter is all that is left me in my age, and she, alas! has too much sensibility for my condition and her own. But thanks be to Heaven, my two boys died fighting for their country!—At these words, the young man, who had been earnestly listening to all that passed, felt his heart touched to the very quick.

The

The supper, consisting of plain country fare, was served up ; but Belisarius, by his lively representations of the happiness that dwells with obscurity, gave it the value of the most sumptuous repast. Calm and retired tranquillity, says he, is the happiest state of man ; and yet, so little are the solid blessings of life understood, it is a state which is never envied !

The young man of the house continued silent during the whole time of supper, with his eyes fixed on Belisarius ; he was lost in contemplation : his inward workings grew stronger as he gazed ; his countenance every moment settled into a deeper gloom, looked more intense with reflection, and fiercer with the various meanings that succeeded each other. Here is my son, said the good old landlord, recalling to his imagination all your battles : he peruses you with an ardent eye.—He finds it difficult, replied Belisarius, to recollect his general.—The enemies of my general, said the young man, have defaced him enough to make it difficult to know him ; but he is too near the hearts of his soldiers to be ever unknown to them.

When Belisarius took leave of this worthy family, I should be glad, says this young man, if my general will permit me to attend him a little part of his way. Being together on the road, I could wish, said he

again, that you would order your guide to walk on before us ; for I have something for your private ear. The condition, sir, to which they have reduced you fills me with indignation. They have left you a terrible example of ingratitude, and the basest perfidy ; it makes me even look with horror on my country ; and as I formerly dared boldly in her service, so I now blush for every drop of blood I spilt in her cause. The place of my nativity is grown detestable to me, and I look with pity on the children whom I have brought into this bad world — Hold ! hold, young man ! says Belisarius ; where is the country in which honest men do not fall the victims of malignity and fraud ? — But this, returned the young soldier, this is without a precedent. There is a peculiarity in your fate that exceeds all imagination. Who was the author of it ? I have a wife and children ; them I will recommend to their grandfather and the Supreme Being, and nothing shall retard me from setting out directly to tear out the villain's heart, who barbarously — Alas ! thou generous youth, said Belisarius, clasping him in his arms, this excess of pity kindles to enthusiasm. Can I consent that a brave young man shall be the perpetrator of an insidious deed ? that a soldier shall become an assassin ? that a virtuous son, a tender husband, and an affectionate father, shall

shall be the slave of guilt and infamy ! It were to make me deserve all that malice has inflicted on me. Reflect a little ; you have relinquished the just defence of your country to solace your aged father, and rear up your tender infants ; and will you now for a superannuated wretch like me, with an extravagant zeal, desert that very father and your helpless babes ? Tell me, should you drench your hands in the blood of my enemies, will that recal my youthful vigour ? Will it restore my lost organs to me ? When you have made yourself criminal, shall I be the less miserable ?—No, replied the young man, but the bloody catastrophe of a villain will strike every guilty mind with horror : to make him a terrible example to the world, I will seize the monster at the foot of the throne or even of the altar, and glutting my poniard in his heart, will thunder in his ear, “ *Belisarius strikes the blow.* ”—And by what right, says Belisarius in a decisive tone, do you mean to execute my revenge ? Have I transferred a right to you, which I do not possess myself ? or do you mean to assume that right in defiance of every law ?—Let law be truly administered, said the young man, and the subject will depend upon the justice of his country ; but since it is perverted, since it gives no protection to innocence and virtue, but connives at vice, and acts in collu-

sion with the guilty, it is time to abjure civil society, and resort to the primitive laws of natural justice.—My worthy good friend, replied Belisarius, that is the reasoning of ruffians, of every lawless banditti ! To see the laws warped to evil purposes is indeed grievous to a just and honest mind ; but the case would be still more grievous, if they were to suffer open violation. Enfeebled laws are most certainly an evil, but a transitory evil ; their total overthrow would be a lasting calamity. You would strike guilt with terror, and yet you are going to encourage it by your example. My calamities, thou worthy youth, have inspired you with noble sentiments ; would you debase those sentiments by an atrocious deed ? Shall the tender sensations of the heart be turned to horror ? I conjure you, in the name of that virtue which you love, dishonour it not by fatal rashness. Let it never be said that virtue has guided the hand of an assassin.

If their cruelty, said the young soldier, had spent its rage on me, I could perhaps arm myself with fortitude to bear the worst ; but when a man renowned, when Belisarius—No, I will never forgive it. But I forgive it, replied Belisarius ; nothing but my interest in this business can provoke your fury ; and if I renounce my own resentments, will you go farther than I am willing

willing to do ? Let me tell you, that if I were inclined to expiate my wrongs by the blood of my enemies, whole nations are ready to arm themselves in my cause ; but I am resigned to my fate ; imitate my example, allow me to be a judge of what is right and honourable ; and if you find within your breast a spirit to encounter death, reserve that spirit for the glorious occasion of serving your country and your prince.

The ardor of the young soldier subsided at these words into wonder and admiration. Forgive me, general, said he, forgive the vehemence which I now blush to own : the outrage of your fortune drove me to excess ; while you condemn my zeal, excuse it also.—I do more, said Belisarius, I esteem it ; it is the emotion, the transport of a generous mind, but let me now direct it. Your family will have need of you, live for them ; and let your children imbibe from you an aversion to the enemies of Belisarius.—Name them, said the young soldier with impatience, and I promise you my children shall grow up from the cradle in mortal hatred of them.—My enemies, replied Belisarius, are the Scythians, the Huns, the Bulgarians, the Sclavonians, the Persians, and all the enemies of my country.—Thou miracle of virtue ! said the young villager, prostrating himself at the feet of the hero. Belisarius embraced him,
and

and taking his leave, There are, said he, in this mixed state inevitable evils; all that a just man can do is not to deserve the portion that may be his lot. If, hereafter, the abuse of power, the perversion of laws, and the prosperity of bad men, should move your indignation, think of Belisarius. Farewel!

CHAP. V.

THE philosophic soul of Belisarius was now upon the point of encountering a trial still more severe than any he had yet met with: but it will in this place be proper to relate what happened when the hero was first seized, and hurried away to prison,

On the night when he was loaded with fetters, and like a state-criminal thrown into jail, amazement, grief, and consternation filled his palace. The alarm which seized his wife ANTONINA, and EUDOKA his only daughter, gave a picture of despair and agony in their most striking colours. At length ANTONINA recovering from her fright, and calling to mind the favours which the empress had lavished on her, began to flatter herself that her apprehensions were groundless; she condemned, with self-reproach, the weakness she had betrayed. Admitted to an intimacy and dearness with

THEO-

THEODORA, the companion and sharer of all her social pleasures, she depended upon support from that quarter, or at least she believed that THEODORA was her friend. In this persuasion she attended the levée of the empress, and falling on her knees in the face of the whole court; Madam, said she, if to have defended and saved the empire on various occasions has been the distinguished lot of BELISARIUS, that the guilt now imputed to him may be examined in open day light, and that his accusers may confront him at the tribunal of the emperor, is now the recompence he asks for all his generous labours: a free trial, and the opportunity of confounding his enemies, is the only favour he can with honour accept. THEODORA made her a sign to rise, and with a look of frigid indifference answered; If Belisarius is innocent, he has nothing to fear; if the charge be true, he is no stranger to the clemency of his master, and he knows the soft accesses to his heart. You may withdraw, madam, in full confidence that I regard you; I shall not easily forget that I have distinguished you by my favours. This cold reception, and the abrupt manner of the conclusion, quite overpowered ANTONINA; she retired pale and trembling, and of all the beholders not one dared to lift an eye towards her. BARSAMES, whom she met, would have passed her by

by unnoticed, if she had not addressed herself to him : BARSAMES was the minister of the treasury, and the favourite of THEODORA. She entreated him to inform her what was the crime laid to the charge of Belisarius. I inform you, madam ! says Barsanes ; I am totally in the dark ; a stranger to this affair ; I have nothing in my power ; I know nothing, nor do I interfere in any thing but the duty of my department : if every body followed the same rule, the peace of the world would be less disturbed.

Ah ! says Antonina, the plot, I see, is deeply laid, and Belisarius is undone. A little further on she met a man who owed his all to her, and who, on the preceding day, was entirely devoted to her service. She made an attempt to expostulate and canvass the affair with him ; but without deigning to hear her, I know your misfortunes, said he, and I am sorely mortified ; but I must beg your pardon, I have a business to solicit, and there is not a moment to be lost : I must leave you, madam, but be assured, that nobody is more zealously attached to you. Antonina went in quest of her daughter, and in an hour's time she received directions to depart the city. The old castle already mentioned was assigned the place of her exile.

The very sight of this castle, solitary and in ruin, filled the heart of Antonina with consternation ;

sternation ; here she considered herself as buried, and a fit of illness seized her soon after her arrival. The tender EUDOKA, distracted by the idea of a father impeached, loaded with irons, and given up a prey to his enemies ; distracted further at the sight of a mother ready to break her heart with anguish ; underwent the severest agonies of mind. All her days, her best, her youthful days, were consumed in offices of tenderness to her afflicted mother ; each night she was bathed in tears, and in that suspense of pain when weary nature sinks down to rest, her slumbers were ever troubled with the most horrid dreams. The image of her father plunged into a dungeon's gloom, and bending under the weight of galling chains, was ever present to her ; and her apprehensions for her mother increased the terrors of the visionary scene.

Antonina had been conversant in courts, and the thorough knowledge she had of them, for ever painted to her fancy the rage of persecution let loose against her husband. What a triumph, said she, for those malignant spirits, who for a series of years have thought themselves depressed by the virtues of a great and virtuous man ! how will they now exult in his downfall ! I see before me the ghastly smile of malice, and mysterious air of calumny, that affects to conceal what it knows, and would appear tender

der of the man whom it is ready to stab. Detested flatterers! ye fawning sycophants! I see ye all, and I hear your cruel insults in our misfortunes. Oh, my daughter! in your distress you may at least enjoy the consolation that you have nothing to reproach yourself; as to me, I have more reason to blush for my former felicities than my present calamities. The sage advice, and all the prudent lessons, your father used to give me were little heeded by me; they were too importunate: in vain he counselled me to shun the baits of pleasure and of courts, to think that my truest dignity consisted in simplicity of manners, that the sincerest happiness was to be found in domestic enjoyment, and that it would be the triumph of my sex to bid adieu to vanities that would vanish like a dream, or end in shame. His remonstrances appeared to me to be the overflowings of spleen, and I complained of his sullen humour to his very enemies. What giddy inattention was mine! and now what a sad reverse! The bursting of the storm awakened me to reflection, and I never saw the abyss till I was tumbling into it. If you knew, my child, the cold averted air with which the empress dismissed me! even she to whom my soul was enslaved! whose every whim was the rule of my actions, the inclination of my heart! Oh! that court, which on the eve of our misfortunes smiled with

with a general complacence on me! the false, insidious train! not one of them, when they saw me leaving it like an outcast, with eyes dejected and swollen with tears, not one of them would acknowledge me! In courts, my child, misfortune has the qualities of a plague, and makes you shunned by all.

Such were the reflections of this unfortunate woman, whose eyes were now opened to the fallacies of courts, though the affections of her heart were not yet alienated from them. She despised her former vanities, and yet loved them still.

An entire year passed away without any tidings of Belisarius; a conspiracy had been detected, the hero was charged with being the author of it, and the voice of his enemies, which was called the public voice, pronounced him guilty of the treason. The principal conspirators had suffered death in determined silence, without the smallest intimation of their leader; upon this was founded presumptive proof against Belisarius, and, for want of positive evidence, he was left to languish in a dungeon, in hopes that his death would supersede the necessity of clear conviction. In the mean time, the old disbanded soldiery, who now were mingled with the people, clamoured for the enlargement of their general, and were ready to vouch for his innocence: a popular insurrection followed, universally menacing to
force

force the prison doors, unless he was immediately set at liberty, This tumult enraged the emperor. Theodora perceiving it, managed artfully to seize the moment of ill-humour and passion, knowing that then only he was capable of injustice. Well, said she, let him be given up to the populace after he is rendered unable to command them. The horrible advice prevailed: it was the decisive judgment against Belisarius.

When the people saw him come forth without an eye in his head, a general burst of rage and lamentation filled the city. Belisarius appeased the tumult. My friends and countrymen, said he, your emperor has been imposed upon; every man is liable to error; it is our business to regret Justinian's error, and to serve him still; my innocence is now the only good they have left me; let me possess it still. The revolt which you threaten cannot restore what I have lost, but it may deprive me of the only consolation that remains in my breast. The swelling spirits of the populace subsided at these words into a perfect calm; they offered him all they were worth: Belisarius thanked them: All I will ask, says he, is one of your boys, to guide my steps to the asylum where my family expects me.

The adventure with the Bulgarians carried Belisarius out of his way, while Tiberius pressed forward to the retreat of the ex-
iled

iled family. The rattling of a carriage in the court-yard of the castle gave a sudden emotion of hope and joy to Antonina and her daughter Eudoxa: the latter ran forth in the strongest agitations of mind, but alas! instead of her father, disappointed to see a youthful stranger, she returned disconsolate to her mother, and with a sigh pronounced, It is not he!

Anselmo, a faithful old servant of the family, appearing in the court-yard, Pray, honest friend, said Tiberius, is not this the retreat of Belisarius? His wife and daughter expect him here, said the faithful Anselmo, but their hopes have hitherto proved abortive; would to Heaven I could suffer for him, so he were at liberty!—He is at liberty, replied Tiberius; he is on his journey hither; you will see him soon; he ought to have been arrived before now.—Oh! walk in, walk in, and communicate the news to his family; I will shew you the way. Madam, exclaimed Anselmo, running eagerly towards Antonina, I have news for you, madam; rejoice and be of good heart, my master lives; he is free, they have restored him to you; a generous young man brings the happy tidings: he thought to have found him here. At these words, Antonina summoned up all her spirits: Where is the generous stranger, the virtuous youth, who interests himself in our afflictions?

tions? Shew him in; let me see him"; Antonina uttered these words with a quick vehemence of joy.—Our miseries are ended now, exclaimed Eudoxa, throwing herself upon her mother's bed, and folding her in her arms; my father lives, he is at liberty, and we shall see him once more; let us, my dearest mother, forget our woes, Heaven has not deserted us; we all shall meet again.

And do you then recal me back to life, said Antonina to Tiberius! has my husband triumphed over his enemies at last? Tiberius, inwardly afflicted that he had only a mockery of joy to offer them, calmly answered, that Belisarius was indeed alive; that he had seen him, had conversed with him, and that, imagining he had before now reached his home, he came to tender him the little offices of friendship and good neighbourhood.

Eudoxa, whose eyes were riveted to Tiberius, plainly saw the symptoms of inselt grief through the struggles of the youth to suppress them. You bring with you, said she, the words of joy and comfort to the afflicted, and yet, amidst the gladsome tidings, I mark an air of dejection that speaks some concealed affliction! Does our misery depress you then? Give me back my father; let him return, and bring health with him to my unhappy mother, then you shall see

See whether riches are necessary to make us happy.

In tender and pathetic scenes like these, the force of nature is so insinuating, that Eudoxa had no need of other charms than the sentiments she uttered to melt and engage the heart of Tiberius. To the grace of her person he was inattentive ; he only saw an affectionate and virtuous daughter, whom a becoming firmness of mind, pious resignation, and duty to a father rendered superior to calamity. Imagine not, said he, that the sentiments of humanity which I have ventured to express, have any tincture of pride or insulting pity. Whatever be the condition to which Belisarius and his family are reduced, their misfortunes will ever be illustrious, and the object of envy still. Why do you talk of misfortune, replied the mother ? if they have restored my husband to his liberty, they are convinced of his innocence ; he must therefore be established in his former possessions.

Madam, said Tiberius, it would be to keep you in a cruel suspense, merely to wound you deeper at last, if I were to cherish any soothing hopes in respect to his condition. To his popularity alone he is indebted for his freedom ; the court has yielded to the dread of an insurrection : but in complying with the demands of the people,

people, they have sent him forth as wretched as they could make him.

No matter, says Eudoxa, with her amiable sensibility of heart ; if they do but leave us a little land to cultivate, we shall not be less happy than the honest country-folks whom I see abroad in the fields.— Gracious Heaven ! exclaimed Tiberius, the daughter of Belisarius humbled to this low situation ! — This low situation ! replied Eudoxa ; it was not unworthy of the heroes of Rome, when Rome was free and virtuous. Belisarius will not blush to be another Regulus ; my mother and I have learned in exile domestic cares and the arts of œconomy : my honoured father shall wear a coat spun by his daughter's hand.

Tears gushed down the cheek of Tiberius, as he marked the pure heartfelt joy that warmed and animated the whole frame of the lovely Eudoxa. Alas ! said he within himself, what a piteous stroke will presently awaken her from this illusion, ! With eyes bent downward to the ground, he stood before her, immoveable in sorrow and silence.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

BELISARIUS was now entering the courtyard of the castle. Honest Anselmo saw him: advancing nearer he recollected his master, and transported with joy pressed eagerly forward to shew him in. But soon perceiving that he was blind, Oh Heaven, said Anselmo, Oh, my master! have I lived to this? These words, broken and intermixed with frequent sobbings, gave Belisarius to understand that it was his old faithful servant Anselmo. The poor fellow prostrated himself at the hero's feet, and embraced his knees. Belisarius raised him from the ground; and having assuaged his grief by exhortations, bid him lead the way to his wife and daughter.

At the sight Eudoxa gave a scream and swooned away. Antonina, who was ill of a slow consuming fever, was seized with the most frantic violence: with all the force of sudden fury she started from her bed, and breaking from the hold of Tiberius and the woman that nursed her, made an effort to dash herself against the floor. Eudoxa returning to her senses, and animated by the shrieks of her mother, flew to her assistance, and catching her in her arms, implored her to forbear out of compassion to her daughter.

ter. Oh, let me, let me die, replied the distracted mother ; if I must live, I will live to revenge his wrongs, and to tear piecemeal the hearts of his barbarous enemies. The monsters of iniquity ! is that his recompence ? But for him they would all long ago have been buried in the ruins of their palaces : he has prolonged their tyranny, that is his crime ! for that he suffers ; for that he has made atonement to the people. Barbarity unheard of ! detested treachery ! the pillar of the state ! their deliverer ! Execrable court ! a set of blood-hounds met in council ! Just heaven, are these your ways ? Behold ! innocence is oppressed, and you look tamely on ! Behold ! the factors of destruction triumph in their guilt !

Amidst this agony of grief, she scattered her hair about the room in fragments, and with her own hands defaced her features : now with open arms she rushed upon her lord, and clasping him to her heart, poured forth her tears, as if she would drown him with her sorrows ; then abruptly turning to her daughter, Die, thou wretch ! she said, escape from a bad world ! here is nought but misery for virtue, and triumph for vice and infamy.

To this violence a mortal languor succeeded. The storm of passions gave a fit of momentary strength, the more effectually to destroy.

destroy. In a few hours after she breathed her last.

And now, Tiberius, what a scene had you before your eyes? A blind old man, his wife lying dead, a daughter in the last extremity of anguish; tears, shrieks, and lamentations all around! This was the situation, the sad catastrophe in which fortune exhibited a family, which for thirty years had flourished in every splendor and dignity of life. The words of a renowned philosopher here occurred to Tiberius: Behold, says he, a spectacle which Heaven surveys with pleasure; a great man wrestling with adversity, and by his courage invincible to the last!

Belisarius did not endeavour to controul either his own grief or that of his daughter; he permitted a free vent to both; but as soon as he had paid to nature the tribute of a feeling heart, he reassumed his strength, and emerged from his afflictions with true fortitude of mind.

Though the anguish of Eudoxa was not abated, yet, lest she should renew her father's troubles, she endeavoured to suppress her sorrows; but still the old general, as he embraced her, found himself moistened with her tears. You afflict yourself, my child, you afflict yourself on account of accidents which, instead of depressing us, ought to invigorate our souls, and raise us above misfortune and disgrace. Your

mother, after having atoned for the errors of her former life, is safe in eternal peace. She now looks down with pity upon us, and commiserates the lot that detains us in this bad world. That cold, inanimated corpse which lies there devoid of motion, is an emblem of the tranquility her soul enjoys. Thus then you behold how vain and transitory are all the calamities of life; a breath of wind comes, and all is vanished. The empire and the splendor of its court have faded away from the eyes of your mother; and now in the bosom of her God, she beholds this world as a little speck in the immensity of space. These are reflections founded on wisdom; these are reflections that administer to the virtuous mind all its consolation, and its best support in the hour of adversity.—Oh! give me that support, assist my feeble sex encompassed thus with wretchedness and misery. I could have borne up against any misfortune that could befall me; but to behold a mother broken-hearted, a tender parent whom my heart adored, expiring within my arms! and thus to see you too, thou best of fathers, in this deplorable condition, to which your enemies have reduced you!—Alas! my daughter, replied Belisarius, in despoiling me of my eyes, they did no more than the infirmities of age or death would shortly have done; and as to what respects my fortune, you little knew the use of afflu-

6

ence,

ence, if you do not know how to disregard it. Oh ! witness for me heaven, said Eudoxa, it is not the loss of fortune that can give me a moment's pain. Then let nothing distress your spirit, replied the venerable father ; and with his hand he wiped the falling tear from her cheek.

Belisarius being informed that a young stranger desired to speak with him, gave him admittance, and asked the intencion of his visit. It is not now a time, answered Tiberius, to offer consolation to you : thou illustrious unfortunate, I respect your sorrows ; I take a share in your afflictions, and it is my earnest prayer to Heaven that I may hereafter be enabled to assuage them ; till then all I can do is to mix my tears with yours.

It was now time to perform the funeral obsequies : Belisarius, supported and guided by his daughter, attended the remains of his wife to their last depository. His grief upon the occasion was that of a philosopher ; it was deep, but silent ; inwardly felt, but outwardly composed : his face was clouded with melancholy, but a grave and sentimental melancholy. With a mien erect, and a steady countenance, he did not so much seem to brave his fortune, as to resign himself to its stroke with a dignity of sorrow.

Tiberius assisted at the mournful ceremony ; he beheld the fond regret of Eu-

DOXA, and he returned deeply affected by the last duties which she paid to the memory of her mother.

Belisarius addressed himself to him in these words : I perceive, generous youth, that it is to your humanity I am indebted for recommendations on my road hither ; instruct me who you are, and to what motive I am to attribute your good offices. My name is Tiberius, replied the youth ; I carried arms under Narſes in Italy, and I have ſince ſerved in the wars of COLCHIS. I was one of the hunting-party to whom you applied for ſhelter, and whoſe indiſcretion you ſo properly checked ; I have ever ſince ſeverely cenſured myſelf for not making my apology, and requeſting a farther favour of you. I am placed in a ſtate of affluence : that may be a miſfortune ; but if you will concur with me, good may be deduced from evil. Near this place I have a country-ſeat, and it is the height of my ambition to conſecrate it to the uſe of an exiled hero. It will be preſuming upon a ſlender title to tell you of the reſpect and veneration I entertain for your character : he who loves his country muſt by a natural conſequence feel the diſgrace of Belisarius, and wiſh to ſoften his calamities ; but perhaps I can urge a claim that will touch you nearer, and in ſome degree ſollicit for me. You will not wholly deſpiſe the ambition of a young
man

man who pants to be admitted to the intimacy of an illustrious hero, that in his converse he may drink, as it were, at the fountain-head of wisdom, of honour and of virtue.

You pay a compliment to my old age, replied Belisarius ; but, however, the interest you seem to take in my misfortunes bespeaks a well-turned spirit, and an elegance of mind. At present you must excuse me ; retirement and self-converse are what I must now have recourse to : the agitation of my spirits must be composed by silent meditation. Hereafter I shall so far accept your proposal, as to wish to live in good neighbourhood with you, and to maintain a friendly intercourse. I have a regard for youth ; in that happy season of life, the soul, as yet unhackneyed in the ways of men, is susceptible of every fine impression ; the sublime and the beautiful of virtue inflame it with a laudable enthusiasm ; and worldly passions have not yet entangled it in their snares. Your visits will ever be acceptable ; call upon me often ; I shall be glad to converse with you.

If I am worthy of that honourable commerce, replied Tiberius, why may I not possess you wholly ? My ancestors will applaud the use I make of the patrimony they transmitted to me, when it is rendered sacred by the retreat of Belisarius. Honour, respect, and reverence, will then be yours,

and my whole household train will learn to emulate my example in treating you with every mark of veneration.

I read, young man, the characters of virtue in all your words, returned Belisarius ; but let us do nothing rashly. Give me to understand, for it is now ten years since I have been sequestered from the world, what is your father's station ? and what are his designs in regard to your future settlement in life ?—We are descended, replied Tiberius, from one of those families which CONSTANTINE transplanted from Rome, and honoured with his highest favours. In the reign of the emperor JUSTIN my father acquired no small share of military glory. He was esteemed and cherished by his sovereign. In the succeeding reign undue preferences were given to others ; at least he thought so, and he retired in discontent. Of that discontent he has since repented, and now for his son he forms schemes of ambition, which he neglected for himself.—You have opened enough to me, said Belisarius, and I will not be an obstacle to your advancement. You have convinced me that the dispositions of your heart are good : the pleasure arising from a generous way of thinking seems at once to be your motive and your recompence : and indeed that pleasure is the sweetest the mind can feel. But I foresee a danger of which you are not aware :

by

by visiting me, you will involve yourself in the ruin of a man proscribed. For let me tell you, my worthy young friend, that a court, whether right or wrong in its measures, never properly reviews its own deeds; it never reforms its conduct. Does it punish a real criminal? He will soon be forgotten. But has it injured the man of blameless integrity? He will be persecuted with unrelenting hatred; for the very mention of his name is a satire on the times, and his existence is to the conscience of his enemies an unceasing remembrancer of guilt.

I take upon me all the risk, says Tiberius; I will be responsible for my conduct. The emperor may have erred, but he is ever open to conviction.

If you mean that he will be open to conviction in regard to me, says Belisarius, you must not lose a thought that way. The measure of my woes is full; the mischief is done; and may the emperor, for the peace of his future days, forget it all.

Since you have gone so far, replied Tiberius, let me insist upon a farther act of generosity, to crown the whole. Preserve Justinian from the eternal reproach of letting you languish away the remainder of your days in misery. The humiliating condition in which I find you is shocking to humanity, a dishonour to the crown, the horror of every honest mind, and the ut-

ter discouragement of all virtue like your own.

The virtue, replied Belisarius, that will be discouraged by my misfortunes, is not like my own. But to deal frankly, I think it possible, as you seem to do, that my wretched condition may awaken the mingled passions of pity and indignation. A poor blind old man can give no umbrage, and may excite compassion. For that reason, I am determined to live in obscurity. If I made myself known to your friends, it was in an unguarded moment, when I was provoked by the intemperance of the company beyond the bounds of patience. It shall be the last indiscretion of my life, and this asylum shall be my grave. Farewel ! The emperor may perhaps be ignorant that the Bulgarians have entered Thrace ; be sure to inform him of it.

Tiberius withdrew not a little disconcerted at the event of his negotiation. The sum of all that passed he reported to Justinian. A body of troops was immediately put in motion ; and in a few days the public tranquillity was confirmed by the expulsion of the Bulgarians. Now then, said the emperor to Tiberius, we are at leisure to visit the unfortunate general. I will pass myself for your father, and be upon your guard that nothing fall from you to undeceive him. Justinian had a lodge
about

about half way to the asylum of Belisarius. Thither he betook himself, detached from his train of courtiers, and the next day proceeded on his visit to the unfortunate hero.

CHAP. VII.

AND is this the hero's residence? Is this the habitation of him, who so often brought me victory and triumph! These were the words of Justinian, as he passed under an old portico mouldering into ruin. As soon as they entered, Belisarius rose to receive them. At the sight of the venerable man, the emperor felt a pang of remorse and shame for the condition to which he had reduced him. An exclamation of grief broke from him, and leaning on Tiberius, he covered his eyes with his hands, as if unworthy to behold the light which the hero saw no more. What mean those tones of grief, says Belisarius?—I have brought my father to see you, replied Tiberius, and he is sensibly touched by your misfortunes.—Where is he? said the general, stretching forth his hands. Let him come to my embrace; for he has a virtuous son. Justinian was obliged to comply with the request, and as soon as he felt the old man pressing to his bosom, his emotions

were so strong and tender, that he was unable to suppress his tears and groans. Restrain this violence of pity, said Belisarius; perhaps I am not altogether so wretched as you imagine. Let us discourse a little about what concerns yourself, and this young man, who will be a comfort to you in your old age. Yes, replied the emperor, in short and interrupted accents, yes—if you will condescend—to let him attend your lectures upon human life.—Alas! what can I offer, said Belisarius, that a wise and good father has not already anticipated?—You may instruct him, said the emperor, in what I perhaps know little of, the ways of courts, where he must pass his days. For a long time I have had so little commerce with men, that the world is as new to me as it is to him. But you, who have seen things in all their various aspects, may render him inestimable service; and therefore I entreat you to unbosom yourself to him.—If he wants to give stability to fortune, said Belisarius, I am unfit to read a lesson on that head, as you perceive. Would he learn to be an honest man at the hazard of all that is dear to him? There I can be of some use. He is born with bright advantages, and that is a primary requisite.—Very true, said Justinian, he is descended from a race of noble ancestors.—That was not my meaning; but however, that is an advantage, if not per-

perverted to a wrong use. Have you ever, young man, continued Belisarius, reflected upon the true idea of nobility? It is a letter of credit given you by your country upon the security of your ancestors, in the confidence, that, at a proper period of life, you will acquit yourself with honour to those who stand engaged for you.—But that credit, says the emperor, is often rashly given.—No matter, resumed Belisarius; it is notwithstanding an institution of useful policy. I imagine to myself, when a child of noble descent comes into the world, naked, weak, indigent, and helpless, like the offspring of a common peasant, I then imagine to myself his country greeting him in this manner: “Welcome, my child! Welcome to my arms! you will hereafter be devoted to my service, intrepid, gallant, generous, and heroic as your famed forefathers. They have transmitted to you their own brilliant example; I confer upon you their titles and their honours, strong reasons both to rouse you to an emulation of their virtues.” This is the solemn scene I figure to myself: can you suggest any thing to your fancy more awful and sublime?—But this is rather carrying it too far; said Justinian.—Not a jot, replied Belisarius; in the education of young minds, we must propose nobly to them. Let me add, there is frugality in dealing out pomp
and

and honours with a liberal hand. For suppose, upon a fair estimate, that these incentives produce only two or three great men in a century : and what then ? The state has nothing to complain of ; nay it has ample compensation. You, young man, must be one of those who are to make this compensation to your country. Here addressing himself to the emperor, You have allowed me, says he, to speak in the stile of a father to him ?—Do it, I conjure you, replied Justinian.—Well then, my son, you must begin with a persuasion that nobility is a flame, which blazes intensely as long as it can communicate itself, but dies away as soon as it wants the proper materials to keep it alive and to support it. Be mindful therefore, young man, of your birth, for it imposes duties on you ; be mindful of your ancestors, for the example they have left you calls for your utmost ardor : remember, that the glory from them devolved upon you, is not an inheritance, upon which you are lazily to subsist ; and above all things, eradicate from your heart that supercilious pride, which looks big with the consciousness of a family name, and beholds with the timorous eye of scorn and jealousy every preference obtained by honest merit. Ambition has in its nature a spurious sort of nobility ; and therefore, by a kind of congenial influence, readily insinuates itself into
the

the minds of persons well descended ; but this passion, when carried to excess, is tinged with meanness, like any other motive of the heart. It swells with its own importance, because it affects an air superior to all the duties of an honest man. Would you mark its operations, and know its character distinctly ? Observe the bird of prey, how it hovers over the field in a morning, and amidst a thousand animals marks out its destined prey : even in the same manner ambition wakens to its early schemes, and plans the future destruction of some splendid virtue. Alas ! my friend, an attachment to self, which is indeed a natural propensity of the heart, becomes enormous in a public character, whenever it fixes into a ruling passion. I have known men in my time, who would not hesitate to risk the safety of an whole army, or the well-being of the state, in order to gratify the selfish views of inordinate ambition. Stung with envy at the success of others whom they have not merit to emulate, they are for ever alarmed with the apprehension of losing the honour of some brilliant action : and were they not restrained by fear, they would make every enterprize miscarry, in which they have not the command : even the public good is a calamity to them, unless ascribed to their own abilities. This set of men, whether in the cabinet or the field, is the most pernicious

nicious race. The man of true honour feels within himself the best intimations of his duty, and he looks for no external motive. His God and his conscience are the witnesses of his actions, and to them only he makes his appeal. A generous openness of heart, a calm deliberate courage, and a prompt zeal for the public service, are at once the constituents of true greatness, and the best evidences of it. Pride, vanity, and envy, are the marks of a little and a narrow spirit. It is not enough that you make no pretension to the praise which you have not merited: you must even possess the noble self-denial, that can renounce the fame you have fairly earned. It must ever be remembered, that the sovereign is liable to error, for he is no more than man: and the mind ought to be forearmed with the consideration, that your country, and the age you live in, may form wrong judgments of you, nay that those judgments may not be reversed by the equity of after-times. In that case, you must consult your own heart, and in the manly self-conference enquire, "Were I reduced to the low condition of Belisarius, would my innocence support me? Would the consciousness of having discharged my duty make even affliction smile?" If you feel within yourself any indecision respecting this matter, live your days

days in obscurity : you have not the materials of a public character.

Alas ! said Justinian, with a deep sigh, what you exact is above the powers of man ; and you are yourself a terrible example.— My example may at first appear terrible, replied Belisarius ; but upon a closer view that impression will wear away. Let us suppose, for instance, that the chance of war, a fit of illness, or a decay of nature, had deprived me of my sight ; it would then have been among the common accidents of life, with nothing remarkable or pathetic annexed to it. And are not the vices of human nature among the incidents of life ? Are they not in the ordinary course of things, as much as the plague that laid waste the empire ? Does it signify by what instrument we fall ? The wrath of a sovereign, the arrow of an enemy, or a grain of sand, they can all dispatch us, and no matter which *. When we enter upon the stage of life, we must be prepared for the changes of the scene. You, sir, who have sent forth your son to a course of military toil in the service of his country ; have you no presentiment, no forecast to suggest to you the variety of perils he has to cope with ? Add to that account, the

* *Democritum pediculi ; Socratem aliud pediculorum genus, bipedes interimerunt. Quorsum hoc ? Ingressus es vitam : navigasti : vectus es ; discede. M. Antoninus. De se ipso, lib. iii.*

the machinations of envy, the snares of treachery, the malice of dissimulation, and the clandestine stabs of calumny; and if your son lives to my age without being ruined by them, you will allow that he had peculiar good fortune. Every thing in this life has its counter-balance. You see me now superannuated, blind, and indigent; the tenant of an old castle in ruins: but look back to a space of thirty years, adorned with happiness, and bright with victory and triumphs: review that period, and you will wish your son the lot of Belisarius. Come, my worthy neighbour; we must summon up a little resolution: you feel the solicitude of a father; but your son, I still flatter myself, does me the honour to envy me, even now.—Most assuredly I do, exclaimed Tiberius.—But he feels a virtuous envy, said the emperor, interrupting him; and the object of it is not the series of your victories, but that unshaken courage which stands at bay with fortune to the last.——Courage is indispensable, replied Belisarius; but not merely that courage which can look death in the face: that is the bravery of every common soldier. The courage of a general is an elevation of mind superior to all human contingencies. Who, think you, in my estimation, is the man of true courage? He who, at the utmost hazard, nay at the expence of his glory, continues obstinate

stinate in the discharge of his duty. Such was Fabius, that Roman worthy, wise, temperate, and firm; who could hear the censures of mankind for his delay, yet hold the even tenor of his conduct free from the irresolution of the vain, inconsistent Pompey, who chose to hazard the fate of Rome and the universe, rather than groan under the intolerable pleasantry of a joke. I will just mention a passage in my own life. In one of my first campaigns against the Persians, the rash advice of certain turbulent spirits in my camp prevailed upon me to give battle, much against my own inclination. I lost the day. For that misconduct I shall ever stand self-condemned. Who lets the caprice of opinion be the rule of his actions, will waver in uncertainty, without precision or dependence on himself. Let me ask, What would be the consequence, if, before we decide with ourselves to be just and upright, we should resolve to wait for a dispassionate age of the world, and an infallible prince? We must end therefore in this conclusion; Keep right onward with firmness and intrepidity. Perhaps, when you reach the goal, Ingratitude and Calumny will be there untired; but Glory will also be there; and if not, Virtue may dispense with it: she will never fail you. Even in the vilest state of misery and oppression, she will be a faithful follower; and, oh!

my

my good friend, if you but knew how much a single smile of Virtue outweighs all the fickle careffes of Fortune !—

Your every word penetrates my soul, said Justinian, in a tender tone of voice, and much embarrassed. How inestimably happy is my son to imbibe these sentiments at this period of life ! It is in this school that sovereigns ought to study !—Let us say nothing of sovereigns, replied Belisarius ; they are more to be pitied than we are.—Yes, said Justinian, situated as they are, with not a friend, at least without any of ability and courage enough to guide their steps, their case is lamentable indeed. My son is destined by his birth to live in courts : it may one day be his lot, in the councils of his prince, or perhaps in a more intimate connection, to avail himself of these your lectures for the benefit of mankind. Do not disdain to open and enlarge his understanding ; proceed to fill his young conceptions with sublime ideas of the true art of governing ; instruct him, as you think the friend of a sovereign ought to be. Justinian is now near his grave ; but his more happy successor may have the pupil of Belisarius for his friend.—Alas ! said the hero, would it were in my power once more, before I die, to be of service to my country ! But the observations my experience has made will be thought the reveries of a visionary

tionary old man. And indeed in theory systems are easily settled; difficulties rise and disappear. The projector is master of his combinations, and he arranges them at his ease. He adapts every thing with facility to all emergencies and the wishes of mankind: he fancies himself free from the influence of passion, an unerring philosopher, exempt from frailties, always enlightened, moderate and wise. A sweet illusion this, and not likely to last long, but that the theorist soon extricates himself out of embarrassments, and has the reins of government in his own hands.—But this illusion has its use, said the young man; for even the chimerical idea of the best possible system may be the model of a good, though imperfect, institution.—I wish it may, replied Belisarius; but I am not sanguine enough to hope it. The very worst arrangements of civil policy, and the most defective forms of government, have their admirers and their zealots.—I will venture to promise on my part, said Justinian, that your speculations will not be thrown away, if you will deign to communicate them to my son.—With all my heart, replied the hero; you deserve that I should be open and ingenuous with you. One condition I have to exact, and that is, entire secrecy during the present reign, in regard to our confidential talk.—And why that caution? said Jus-

Justinian.—Because I am not willing, replied Belisarius, to grieve an aged emperor's breast, and cloud the sunset of his days with a prospect of evils which he has not power to dispel. Such was the first interview between them.

On his way back, What an indelible disgrace, said Justinian, not to have known and distinguished such a man! It is thus, my best Tiberius, it is in this manner we are deceived, and rendered tyrants against the inclination of our hearts.

The emperor was haunted all night by the image of Belisarius. The next day he saw him before his eyes in every apartment of the palace. In the evening, about the same hour, he set out to enjoy the melancholy pleasure of a second meeting.

C H A P. VIII.

BELISARIUS was walking a little way on the road with his guide. At sight of him, Justinian alighted from his carriage, and familiarly began, You find us deep in meditation, representing to ourselves the injustice of the sentence which wicked men extorted from an aged emperor. My son and I were engaged in a serious train of reflections upon the wretched state of sovereigns,
and

and the dangers that surround them. I could not help thinking it a wonderful event in the history of human affairs, that a whole people, consisting of free-born men and equal all by nature, should with one joint assent resign their rights into the hands of a single person, a weak individual, a feeble mortal like themselves, subject to the same infirmities, open to imposition, liable to self-delusion, and prone to errors, which in a moment may prove destructive to millions!—And do you imagine, says Belisarius, that in a senate, or an assembly of the people there is more safety, greater wisdom, or a steadier administration of justice? Was it under a monarchy that Camillus, Themistocles, and Aristides, were proscribed? To multiply the members of government is to multiply its vices, for every individual mingles his own. The most simple form of government is the most eligible; and whether states were founded upon conquest or original compact; whether mankind agreed to transfer their natural rights to the civil magistrate, or were by superior force subdued into political society; in either case it was reasonable, that the most renowned for wisdom or for valour should attract the popular regard, and gain the general suffrage in his favour. I am not therefore surprised that the magistrate or the hero should be selected for the government

vernment of the whole ; but that a single person could be found willing to accept so painful a pre-eminence, is matter of astonishment.—This part of the argument, said Tiberius, is not sufficiently clear to my apprehension.—To form a distinct idea, replied Belisarius, it will help you much, if you will figure to your fancy the first formation of a state, and place yourself alternately in the different characters of the people and the sovereign.

Where is the risk, the people may be supposed to say, what hazard do we run in giving supremacy to a king? With the good of the whole we blend his happiness; we make them but one thing; the force of the community becomes the strength of the crown; upon the general weal his glory is grafted; and the regal character is at once derived from the people and supported by them. The general love of his subjects will be his true self-love, and his best interest will be found in justice, moderation, and beneficence. This must have been the political creed of mankind.—But they did not take into their account, said Justinian, the passions and the complication of motives that encompass a prince.—Very true, replied Belisarius; they only thought of an inseparable union of interests between the sovereign and his people: that there ever could be a separation of those interests, and that

that the two parts of the body-politic should live in a state of mutual hostility, did not enter into their idea. Usurpation appeared to them a kind of suicide, that could only proceed from a total privation of reason : and should the prince be seized with so extravagant a phrenzy, they relied upon the wisdom of the legislature to controul the passions of a man grown an enemy to himself. They foresaw indeed that many might find their interest in mischief and evil deeds; but they persuaded themselves that such a confederacy in vice would be a small minority, against which a great superiority of good and honest men, with the prince at their head, would always preponderate. And indeed, till fatal experience opened the eyes of men, who could foresee that kings would ever sink to such a degree of infatuation, as to divorce themselves from their people, and combine with the avowed enemies of all the rights of man ? A conduct like this is such an outrage to nature and to reason, that it was necessary it should actually happen, before the possibility of it could be believed. It was not in the simplicity of ancient manners to expect so shocking a revolution.

To consider, on the other hand, the feelings of sovereigns in that early period of mankind, he, on whom the supreme authority devolved, must be deemed the party

E

that

that had most reason to be alarmed. For if the father of a family, who has a charge of five or six children to educate, and to establish in the world, feels an incessant anxiety that plants thorns upon his pillow, what must be the case with the chief of a family which is counted by millions ?

He must have reasoned with himself in this manner : The compact which I make with my people, binds me to live for their good only : the repose of my life must be devoted to their happiness. I engage myself by a solemn oath to regard the good of the community in every legislative act, and to submit my own will to the spirit of the laws. In proportion to the power committed to me, my natural liberty is abridged. The more my subjects confide in me, the stronger are the obligations I am under. For the frailties of my nature, my errors, and my passions, I render myself accountable ; I give my people a kind of jurisdiction over me ; and, in short, by consenting to reign, I abdicate myself. The private man is, as it were, annihilated, to make room for royalty to engross the soul. Can there be a more generous sacrifice ? an engagement of so solemn a nature ? And yet these were the sentiments of Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius. *I have nothing properly my own, said one of them. My very palace is not mine,*

was

was the declaration of the other. The few of their stamp thought the same.

In the appendages of sovereignty vulgar error marks only some external circumstances of parade, which serve to awaken envy, such as palaces, the splendor of a court, the homage that is paid, together with the pomp and magnificence which policy attached to the regal state, in order to give it sanction and authority. And yet amidst all this brilliancy, the sovereign is no more than mere man, overwhelmed with splendid cares, distracted with anxieties, a self-consuming votarist for the public good, and a victim to his duty, if he be zealous to perform it, an object of scorn if he neglect it, and of detestation, should he betray it. Under perpetual restraint, and fluctuating for ever betwixt good and evil, he finds himself environed with enemies to his quiet, with painful vigils, devouring cares, a tedious apathy, that makes him weary of himself, and ends in a distaste to every thing. Behold there the portrait of a king ! It is true, invention has exhausted itself to make his enjoyments counterballance his cares ; but his cares are numberless, and his pleasures are confined within the scanty circle of his wants. The highest luxury is not ingenious enough to give him one new organ of sensation ; and while pleasures solicit him on every side, nature quite harrassed

fed down forbids enjoyment, and the palled appetite refuses all. Thus every thing about him is superfluity : his extensive palace is but a void immense, of which he occupies a little corner ; under crimson curtains and gilded ceilings he seeks in vain that sweet repose which dwells in the peasant's cottage ; and at his table, the pleasure of the monarch ends, when appetite craves no more.

I perceive, said Tiberius, that every thing cannot be enjoyed, where every thing abounds ; but is the pleasure of chusing nothing in the account ?

Alas ! young man ! exclaimed Belisarius, my worthy young man ! you are not acquainted with that incurable disease satiety. It is the most fatal languor of the mind. Are you acquainted with the cause of it ? The power of enjoying with facility makes us listless, and disgusted at every thing. Either our desires have not time to revive, or they revive only to loath the affluence that invites too soon. Art has wearied itself in studying delicacies to provoke and quicken the languid appetite ; but the powers of perception are decayed, the inlets of pleasure are obstructed, the incentives to action are extinguished in the soul, and delight itself has lost both its allurements and its gratifications. Woe to the man who can command every thing with a wish ! for as, on the

the one hand, the predominant idea of a total privation saps all the vigour of the mind, by fixing a train of corroding reflections ; so, on the other, a constant habit of enjoyment gives insipidity to what were otherwise exquisite, and thus life loses its relish.

You will grant me, however, interposed Tiberius, that there are refined and sensible delights, in their nature proper for the gratification of a monarch, which are always sure to give rational enjoyment, without the danger of disgusting by repetition.—As for instance ? says Belisarius.—The love of glory, for instance, replied the young man.—But what sort of glory ?—Why of all the various classes of glory renown in arms must hold the foremost place.—Very well ; that is your position : and do you think the pleasure that springs from conquest has a sincere and lasting charm in it ? Alas ! when millions are stretched in mangled heaps upon the field of battle, can the mind in that situation taste of joy ? I can make allowance for those who have met danger in all its shapes ; they may be permitted to congratulate themselves, that they have escaped with their lives ; but in the case of a king born with sensibility of heart, the day that spills a deluge of human blood, and bids the tears of natural affection flow in rivers round the land, that cannot be a day of true enjoyment. I have more than once traversed over a field of battle : I would have been

glad to have seen a Nero in my place ; the tears of humanity must have burst from him. I know there are princes who take the pleasure of a campaign, as they do that of hunting, and who send forth their people to the fray, as they let slip their dogs : but the rage of conquest is like the unrelenting temper of avarice, which torments itself, and is to the last insatiable. A province has been invaded ; it has been subdued ; it lies contiguous to another not yet attempted * : desire begins to kindle ; invasion happens after invasion ; ambition irritates itself to new projects, till at length comes a reverse of fortune, which exceeds in the mortification it brings, all the pride and joy of former victories. But to give things every flattering appearance, let us suppose a train of uninterrupted success : yet, even in that case, the conqueror pushes forward, like another Alexander, to the limits of the world, and then, like him, remeasures back his course, fatigued with triumphs, a burthen to himself and to mankind, at a loss what to do with the immense tracts which he has depopulated, and melancholy with the reflection that an acre of his conquests would suffice to maintain him, and a little pit-hole to hide his remains from the world. In my youth I saw the sepulchre of Cyrus :
a stone

• ———— *ô si angulus iste*
Proximus accedat, qui nunc denormat agellum ! HOR.

a stone bore this inscription : *I am Cyrus, he who subdued the Persian empire. Friend, whoever thou art, or wherever thy native country, envy me not the scanty space that covers my clay-cold ashes* *. Alas ! said I, turning aside from the mournful epitaph, is it worth while to be a conqueror !

Tiberius interrupted him with astonishment ; Can these be the sentiments of Belisarius ?—Yes, young man, thus thinks Belisarius : he is able to decide upon this subject. Of all the plagues which the pride of man has engendered, the rage of conquest is the most destructive.—I must give up the point, says Tiberius, but still there is a prerogative of enjoyment, a gratification worthy of kings, and that is the supreme delight of serving mankind, a pleasure springing from the happiness of millions.—Ay ! replied Belisarius, if a king could be sure of making a nation happy, his accession were an object of envy ; ascending his throne he would rise to the great pre-eminence of dispensing public good, and guiding the reins of government for the welfare of mankind. This would be a sacred privilege ! that a generous mind should sacrifice the repose of life to this great ambition, would not be matter of astonishment. But address yourself to the august old man who now reigns over you, and desire to be informed by him, whe-

E 4

ther

* Vide Plutarch's life of Alexander.

ther to discharge the duties of his station is an easy task?—That a prince has done his utmost, replied Justinian, to promote the welfare of his subjects, to make their burthen light, and to deserve the love of his people, a nation may sometimes be willing to believe.

They may believe it, said Belisarius, and some princes, even during their lives, have obtained that glorious suffrage. It has been the recompence of their upright government ; their sweetest retribution. But without some singular event to give sincerity to public testimonials, unless some great and trying conjuncture happen, when the sentiments of the people may be supposed to burst forth in the honest effusion of their hearts, what prince can flatter himself that the addresses he receives are not suborned ? How can he persuade himself that he hears the real sense of the nation ? His courtiers vouch for it ; but who is responsible for them ? While the song of revelry echoes through the palace, how shall he be assured that in the remoter parts of his dominions, the dome of the vice-roy is not filled with the complaints of injured men, and the cottage of the labourer with the groans of misery ? The public festivals are nothing but scenes acted before him, and the applause he meets is too often preconcerted. He sees the vilest of mortals canonized for deities ;

deities ; and though the vain tyrant, whose days are spent in one continued round of voluptuousness, may imbibe the incense which adulation offers ; yet the man of virtue, who made his reign a painful endeavour to do all the good that depended on him, closes an honourable life in anguish, and descends to the tomb of his ancestors without ever being sure that he had one sincere friend. When I reflect that Justinian is in this situation, and that he is likely to carry with him to his grave a persuasion that Belisarius was a traitor, and never loved him, I own myself sorely grieved : it is a stab to my very heart.

No ! exclaimed the emperor with impetuosity, (and then recollecting himself suddenly) No, said he in a more deliberate accent, a prince is not always unhappy to such a degree, as not to know that in the course of his reign he has been truly loved.

Be it so, replied Belisarius ; he knows that he is loved ; and yet even this sweet reflection is dashed with bitterness. Certain it is, the good of his people must be dear to him in proportion as he thinks himself dear to them ; and in consequence, whatever good he does, or whatever evil he wards off from them, the account appears to him, in the general mass of good and evil, so inadequate to his wishes, that at length in the evening of a long and stormy life, he

seriously puts the question, *What good have I done?* Struggling with adversities, and yet unable to subdue them, what must be his regret, when he sits down conscious of his feeble efforts, and sees himself a slave to the emergencies of the day, obliged to govern by expedients only? Marcus Aurelius is the prince upon record who best deserved to see the world happy under his administration *, and yet what a reign was his? A scene of wild commotion, in which all the accumulated ills of life seemed to crowd themselves together †. One would have thought it an insurrection of all nature, a general conspiracy to baffle every effort of wisdom and of virtue. It is a melancholy task, that he who raised a temple to *Benevolence*, was doomed to see the blackest period of distress and misery. But not to go so far back for examples, was ever a reign more distinguished for activity, for vigour, and apparent success, than this of Justinian? A series of war and victory in three quarters of the world for thirty years together; the losses of a century repaired in one reign; the people of the North and of the West exter-

* *Ipse virtutem omnium, cœlestisque ingenii extitit, ærumnisque publicis quasi Defensor obiectus est.* Aurel. Vict.

† *Ut prope nihil, quo summis angoribus alteri mortales solent, dici seu cogitari queat, quod non, illo imperante, fecerit.* Aurel. Vict.

exterminated beyond the Danube and the Alps; tranquility established through all the provinces of Asia; kings overthrown, and led in triumph; the desolation of a plague; the waste of invasions, and the ruin of earthquakes effaced almost from the memory of man by the restoring hand of unwearied virtue; places of defence and temples without number, the former built from the ground, and the latter decorated with every splendid ornament! These were the works of Justinian's reign; imperial works! how glorious! how magnificent! And yet what a falling off! Behold him now in the decline of old age; what has he done? That victorious arm was never able to fix the empire upon a durable foundation; at this very instant it totters to its ruin; that is at last the close of all his labours, the fruit of so many triumphs. Let this, Tiberius, be a lesson to you; let it instruct you to view with pity the splendid misery of kings, to rejudge their actions with lenity, and in particular to conceive no disaffection to a venerable sovereign on account of the ills which he has let fall, or the good which he has omitted to do.

You alarm me, said Tiberius, with these reflections; my first advice to any friend of mine upon a throne shall be to abdicate it.—To abdicate it! replied Belisarius; that you will not do; courage will never be the

adviser of desertion. Were you ever induced by peril and fatigue to abandon the sword? There is no difference in this view of things, between a sword and scepter. It is incumbent upon every man to crowd into his life all the duties he can. Endeavour not to conceal from your friend, that he must inevitably be a victim to those about him; but make him sensible at the same time, that there is a pleasure as well as a pain in being thus sacrificed; and that, in order to insure his true recompence, he must inflame his imagination with the enthusiasm of public virtue, and must thence deduce the sweet reward of all his generous labours*.

—And where is this reward to be met with, interposed Tiberius?—It consists, returned Belisarius, in our own inward consciousness; it is purely sentimental, and springs out of the reflection that we find within our breasts, the active principles of humanity, social affection, generous sympathy, those amiable qualities which constitute the dignity of our nature, and merit the approbation of earth and Heaven. Can you imagine that a king has such contracted views, as to rise in a morning to balance the account of what he may merit in the course of the day? His language to himself, I take it, must be,

Awake!

* *Homo qui benefecit, ne plausum quærat: sed ad aliud negotium transeat quemadmodum vitis, ut rursus suo tempore uvam producat.* Marc. Antonin. lib. 3.

Awake ! arise ! and with you let justice and benevolence open their eyes on the world. Divest yourself of little selfish passions, of your schemes of private gratification, and resign even the repose of your life. You do not live for yourself alone ; the soul of a whole people stirs within you ; your will is the will of millions, and properly promulgated receives the sanction of a law. Let the law then be the rule of your government, and remember that on the happiness of numbers your own interest is grafted *. You are moved, Tiberius ! your hand trembles in mine ! let me bid you rest assured, that the very tears of virtue have inexpressible delight. Virtue, it is true, cannot ascertain a constant good, unmixed with evil ; but is there such a thing in human life ? And if there is, for whom is it reserved ? For the inactive, the wicked, and unworthy ? The mischief which a patriot prince cannot remove, draws tears from his humanity, but they are not the bitter tears of envy, remorse, and turpitude. They are the pleasing sorrows of a Titus, who weeps that he has lost a day : They are pure as the source from which they spring.

You

* *Mane, cum gravatim a somno surgis, in promptu tibi sit cogitare te ad humanum opus faciendum surgere. Non sentis quam multa possis præstare, de quibus nulla est excusatio naturæ ad ea non aptæ ; et tamen adhuc, prudens scienisque, humi fixus hæres !* Marcus Antonin. lib. 5.

You may therefore aver to your friend, and pray aver it with energy, as if some god were breathing through you, that armed with virtue he will never know the pang of envying the fortunes of the vile and wicked. But this constancy of mind, this true support of virtue, is not the spontaneous growth of the human breast; the spirit of a young prince must be attempered to it; and how he is to be initiated, we will make the subject of to-morrow's interview.

He moulds me to his will, said Tiberius to Justinian; his power over my soul is irresistible; he sinks, inflames, and elevates at his own discretion. — He tears my very heart, replied the emperor; then fetched a deep sigh, and remained a considerable time in pensive silence. To dispel the gloom his court tried all its gaieties, but every endeavour was fruitless importunity. On the morrow, having signified his inclination to take a solitary walk, he struck into a neighbouring wood; Tiberius was there in waiting, and together they went to their appointment. The young man did not fail to revive the topic which had been promised, and Belisarius proceeded in the following manner:

CHAP. IX.

IT has been made a question, Whether it be possible to love virtue for its own sake only? So generous a principle, it must be acknowledged, is the sublime instinct of certain chosen spirits. I call it an instinct: for whenever it is the work of reflection, it degenerates into interest: nor can this proposition be understood to derogate from human nature. I will shew you, that virtue, like friendship, refines itself by degrees from the dross of interest, and takes a more exalted nature: the operations of one will illustrate the other.

It is to views of convenience, of pleasure, and utility, that friendship owes its origin. The effect in the process is detached from the cause: the motives subside, and the sentiment produced keeps possession of the heart: a secret charm insinuates itself, and by the force of habit mingles with our very love of existence. In this state of the mind, uneasy sensations may take place instead of promised joys; but still, the heart which has tasted of friendship will, rather than renounce it, forego all the soothing comforts it expected to enjoy. Friendship is a sympathy which commences in gaiety and exultation, and gathers strength in the hour
of

of affliction. The same may be affirmed of virtue *. To engage our affections, it must first attract by an appearance of the agreeable or the useful: for before we are enamoured of her, we love ourselves: and till we know the real sweets of virtue, we look for gratifications very different from what she affords. When Regulus, in the spring of life, beheld her for the first time, she struck him with the pomp of triumph and the splendor of glory. Whether he abandoned her afterwards, when she had nothing to give but fetters, the torture, and the funeral pile, need not now be mentioned.

You must therefore begin by sounding the temper of the prince, and discovering the objects that chiefly strike his fancy. To be free, powerful, rich, obeyed by his subjects, esteemed through life, and happy in the prospect of future fame, will perhaps be the prevailing desires. Inform him therefore, that from virtue alone he can obtain what he pants for, and you will not mislead him.

There is a secret in the art of governing, too often concealed from the pride of kings, in which every well-disposed prince ought to

* *Si quid in vitâ humanâ invenis potius justitiâ, veritate, temperantiâ, fortitudine, ad ejus amplexum totis animi viribus contendas suadeo.*

Marc. Antonin. lib. iii.

to be early instructed, and that is contained in this sober truth: there is no absolute power except that of the laws, and he who aims at despotism enslaves himself. For what is law but the will of the whole community †, expressed by one man, in the same manner as his power is the whole force of the state collected in himself? But when the will of one is erected in opposition to the whole, the force of the body-politic will then be set against the prince, who resorts to the practice of dividing, weakening, and subverting the strength of the kingdom; or, perhaps, at length he is in open arms against it. Instead of being the father of his people, he is now their tyrant: he governs by intrigue, and strives by little arts of policy to delude, surprise, alarm, and terrify his subjects into a tame submission; or else he resorts to his agents of destruction, who sell the blood of their countrymen, and march sword in hand through the realm, covering all with desolation, till murder has taken off every honest man who dared to resist the yoke and vindicate the rights of nature. Hence the rage of civil commotions, in which a brother says to his brother, Die, or yield to the tyrant, who has paid me for cutting your throat. Proud of an usurpation maintained by force of arms,

† *Communis sponso civitatis.* Pand. lib. i. tit. 3.

arms, or founded on superstition, the tyrant congratulates himself: but let his heart tremble within him, if he ever cease to pamper the pride, or controul the licentiousness of his detested party. While they serve him, they chain him to themselves by his fears; and for the obedience they pay their captive king, they demand in return impunity for their crimes. Being thus grown the oppressor of one part of his subjects, he is a slave to the other; as mean and abject to the bad, as fierce and domineering to the good. Constrained to manage with his accomplices, he is obliged to study how to gratify them, that the passions which list on his side may not revolt from him; for he knows their fierce and dangerous quality, since they have already marked their way with ruin, and broke asunder all the ties of nature and humanity. The tyger, trained to the chace, and educated by man to the skill of devouring, will fly at his master, if share of the prey be withheld from him. The tyrant's compact with his factors of mischief is precisely the same.

The supreme power, therefore, as it approaches to tyranny, becomes feeble in proportion, and depends for support upon the men who have leagued themselves against the constitution. It must be ever attentive to the tools of a party, lest they should make a defection to the interests of their country.

country. Every mark of compliance, respect, and the most servile toleration, must be paid to them, to the utter subversion of justice, and the neglect of all sound policy. The prince must descend to the meanest deferences, the most flagrant partiality, the humblest dissimulation, and even so low as to wear the smiles of content, with resentment at his heart.

The prince that would govern according to the true spirit of civil policy, must make the laws the sole rule of his conduct! for his authority is inferior to the laws, founded upon the will and the whole force of the community. He will, in that case, know no enemies but the base and wicked, the common enemies of society. Whoever interests himself in the support of order and the public tranquillity, is an assertor of the sovereign authority which protects him. Every citizen, in the declared foe of his prince, beholds his own personal enemy. Party-division is banished from the state, and the sovereign, in league with his people, is rendered rich and powerful by the wealth and power of his people. Under no necessity to intrigue with parties, he reigns in freedom, perhaps in justice, with his crown firm and unshaken on his head. His administration, fixed upon the basis of law and public security at home, becomes respectable to foreign powers; and as he is
never

never instigated by caprice and pride to wage a war of ambition, his armies, maintained and regulated under proper discipline, are ready to take the field with vigour and with spirit, when the public cause demands the exertion of the state against the author of civil discord, or the foreign usurper. Oh! my friend! let justice be the basis of the supreme authority, and the love of a grateful people will not fail to be its most invigorating principle, and its best support. The slave will fight but reluctantly for his prison and his chains; but the citizen, who is secure in his civil rights, who loves his prince, and is reciprocally beloved, will hazard himself in the defence of the authority to which he is indebted for his own protection. Amidst the hardships of the campaign, and the perils of battle, he feels himself inflamed with the idea that he is struggling for his fires and his altars, for all that can be dear to him.

Ah! these lessons, said Tiberius, sink deep into my heart: they are delivered with words that burn; they kindle a flame in the soul. When shall I be able to inspire the breast of kings with sentiments like these!

It is now clear, replied Belisarius, that the true splendor and authority of sovereigns are founded on justice; that virtue and beneficence strengthen the foundation; and that

that the most absolute prince is he who reigns in the hearts of his people.—From what you have said, interposed Tiberius, it is now plain that true policy and reason are convertible terms; and that the art of governing consists in following the suggestions of wisdom and of virtue.—You are perfectly right, replied Belisarius; nothing can be more simple, more easy in the practice, and sure of its effect. The emperor Justin, originally an honest peasant of Illyria, who came to a throne from the plough, found the way to endear his administration to mankind. Was it owing to his skill in politics? Far from it; it was owing to the rectitude of his mind, and the amiable dispositions of his heart. Were it my lot to govern, I should endeavour to copy that great example. Far be from the breast of a prince that sly, slow policy, that looks with an oblique eye upon every thing. It looks about indeed with a kind of indirect prudence, and recoils in time from rocks and precipices; but it is disquietude at best. How unlike the serenity enjoyed by him who loses all thoughts of self in the love of millions, and is therefore less exposed than the most wary, circumspect, and suspicious tyrant! But the misfortune is, the prince is too often alarmed by artful and designing men: he is taught to consider his people as an enemy to be dreaded; and that dread,

as

as soon as impressed, lends reality to the ideal danger ; for it gives birth to mistrust, and mistrust is the mother of hatred and of malice.

You have observed that a prince, a man almost solitary and without connections, has his cares and wants contracted into very scanty limits ; that at his ease he commands all the real good in life ; that he is narrowly circumscribed ; and all beyond a small circle is vanity, illusion, and deceit. While nature prescribes to him to be moderate in his desires, all things about him irritate his passions, and stimulate intemperance. Alas ! were it his aim to live in harmony with his people, he would have no party but his subjects, no interest but that of the state. How differently are things circumstanced at present ? All confidence is extinguished ; the necessity of being ever guarded against a turbulent and seditious populace is inculcated ; and a standing army is maintained to terrify those who should be cherished by their sovereign. By these means the prince lives at variance with his subjects ; his party is formed, and Ambition with a train of inordinate desires stalks at the head of it. This hydra of faction is ever insatiable, and yet unconstitutional means must be tried to satisfy its rapacity. Here then is the first spring of that monstrous distinction, which we have known in the empire, between the
pro-

provinces of the people and the provinces of the emperor, between the interests of the subject and those of the prince. The idea of property should never enter the thoughts of the sovereign. When once his imagination is struck with it, it follows that the security of his crown and his life seems to depend upon that property, and by a natural progress avarice takes possession of him. He thinks himself enriched by the impoverishment of his people; and whatever rapacity has seized, is set down as clear gain. In proportion as the subject is plundered, he appears to the jealous prince reduced to a deeper subjection. Hence schemes of rapine on the one hand, discontent and repining murmurs on the other; and hence the dark seeds of civil war, which, like a smothered flame, lie brooding in the very heart of the state, and at length break out in sudden eruptions all over the land. Of his private coffers the sovereign now thinks he has the full advantage; he congratulates himself on the prudence which settled his measures so long before-hand: but, short-sighted man! he little perceives that, by being just, he would have been above such little timid precautions; and that all the mean, and of course cruel, passions, which list for hire in his cause, would be vile and useless, if virtue were the spring of his actions. This, my friend Tiberius,

this

this is the doctrine which the future sovereign ought to hear from you. Let him once be persuaded that the state and the sovereign are but one thing: let him understand that this political union constitutes his true strength, the basis of his dignity, his honour, and his peace; and ideas of property will then be rejected as sordid and unworthy *. His solid advantage will be placed in the good he procures for his people; and thus his passions will transform themselves to the virtues of a patriot king, just and equitable for his own interest, moderate upon principles of ambition, and benevolent through very selfishness. It is by considering things in this way, my worthy friends, that truth appears the parent of virtue. But Truth, I grant you, appears at first with an awkward mien at court. He who gains her first audience from a king, must have been endowed with no small degree of courage. When flattery has taught the pernicious maxims, that princes reign for themselves alone; that royal independence consists in the gratifications of desire; and that even caprice is a state-law; the faithful and honest counsellor who undertakes to refute this notable system

* The emperor Trajan was used to compare the treasure of a prince to a swelled and distempered spleen, which enfeebles and consumes the rest of the body.

system, will not be graciously received: but let him be once heard, and he will gain the royal ear: one truth established, the rest may be poured upon him with rapidity, for they are sure of their effect; and the prince, instead of dreading, will anticipate the conclusion.

Truth will now derive charms from virtue, and virtue in its turn will lend embellishments to truth. It is indispensibly necessary that the latter should enlighten the mind; for the inclination of our nature to a good, whose value is not explained, is merely a blind, a vague, and uncertain instinct. But a desire to serve mankind is virtue, founded on the knowledge of remote and extensive consequences. To know the interests of humanity is the true study of a prince. Whatever is just, whatever is useful, that is truth, and the truth a king should investigate: it is the great band of society; in all business, in every transaction of life, it upholds the chain of moral duties; on mutual wants and mutual aids grafts human happiness, and makes the author of public good a partaker of the blessings he bestows. This is the fit employment of a prince; to this he should dedicate his days; to know himself, and the nature of man †; to develop the secret

F

† *Quenam sunt eorum mentes, quibus rebus stud. n., quæ habent in honore, quæ amant: cogita te nudas ipsorum mentes intueri. Marc. Antonin. lib. ix.*

movements of the heart, the operations of habit, the specific qualities of character, the influence of opinion, the powers and the weaknesses of our frame; to study intensely, and not with frivolous curiosity, but a fixed and steady determination of the will, with a perseverance alarming to flatterers, the temper, the manners, and the resources of his people, together with the conduct of ministers; and in this noble enquiry to let in light to the judgment on every side, with a detestation of the clandestine informer, and a generous encouragement of those who have the spirit to call aloud for a redress of grievances committed in his name. These are the things which constitute the love of truth; and thus, said he, addressing himself to Tiberius, thus every prince will love it, who is, as he ought to be, persuaded, that to be great he must be just and upright. In conveying these sentiments to him, you will instruct him how to be free and independent in the midst of a court; for it is there he must be jealous of his liberty. To make him sensible of this, will be the arduous part of your undertaking: this is the point which you must labour with assiduity and firmness.—It shall be done, said Tiberius, when I am armed with your instructions.—Here the conversation broke off, and they took leave of each other.

It

It has happened by some strange fatality, said the emperor, that in all ages and countries, the friends of mankind have been hated by those who are bound to be the fathers of the people. The popularity of Belisarius was his only crime: it was that alone provoked his enemies, and perhaps alarmed my jealousy. Alas! they made me fear him; it had been better if I had endeavoured to imitate him.

CHAP. X.

ABOUT the same hour on the following day, Belisarius, expecting his visitors, seated himself again under the old oak upon the road, where he had received them the evening before. He said, in a loud soliloquy, To have found two virtuous men, who beguile me from myself, and enter thus into a discussion of the great objects of humanity, is a circumstance that alleviates my misfortunes. How soothing to contemplate the social interests of man! My afflictions are softened by it! The very idea of being but remotely conducive to the welfare of nations has raised me above myself, and now I see how the diffusion of benevolence to a whole people assimilates man to his Divine Creator.

Justinian and Tiberius over-heard these last words as they approached. You are warm in the praise of beneficence, said the emperor; and indeed beneficence, of all the virtues, affords the most endearing and the sweetest sensations. Happy the man whose lot it is to enjoy so noble a pleasure! —And yet this supreme delight must be tasted with moderation, replied the hero; for even goodness itself, if not conducted by wisdom and justice, degenerates into an opposite vice. Attend young man, said he to Tiberius, and mark what I have to offer on this head.

Of sovereign authority the highest act is the distribution of favours and marks of grace: this partakes of the nature of beneficence, and is therefore a pleasing exertion of power; but in the exercise of it, it is requisite that the prince should be guarded against seduction. The whole of his intelligence must arise from those who approach his person; and of that number there is not one who does not for ever inculcate, that the seat of majesty is in the court; that all regal splendor is derived from the brilliant appearance that enlivens the palace; and that the most valuable prerogative of the crown displays itself by a profusion of favours, which are stiled the munificence of the sovereign. Gracious heaven! the munificence! it is the substance of the people
he

he bestows ; the spoils of the poor and indigent ! Thus the prince is deceived by words : adulation and treachery besiege his throne ; assiduity for ever pays its court ; and the habit of refusing nothing gains upon the credulous sovereign, who little thinks of the tears extorted from the poor by the extravagance of the court: exultation fills the palace, and every room echoes with praises of the royal munificence. That munificence assumes the mien of virtue, and wealth is squandered without considering from whence it came. Alas ! would kings reflect how their splendor grows out of the misery of others ; and for the sake of an ungrateful crew, what a number groan in wretchedness ! But, Tiberius, the prince who has one true friend will be sure to know this ; and he will know besides, that true beneficence consists more in oeconomy than lavish distribution ; that every partial grant is injustice to merit, and that from injustice spring all the worst evils that can distract a state.

You behold the munificence of sovereigns, said Tiberius, with an eye of severity.—I consider it in its true light, replied the hero, as a mere personal attachment, which, in the choice of men for public offices, counteracts the natural course of justice, of nature, and of reason. For justice appropriates honours to virtue, and rewards

to merit: for the arduous business of high employments nature brings forth great abilities and consummate talents; and surely reason directs that of men the best possible use should be made: but partiality confers the recompence due to virtue upon elegant and polished vice; and thus complaisance is preferred to honest zeal, adulation to truth, and meanness to elevation of soul. The superficial gift of pleasing, as if it were superior to every other gift of nature, aspires to all the favours of the crown, and generally engrosses them. From these premises it may be inferred, that partiality in the distribution of favours is the sure mark of a bad reign; and the prince who resigns into the hands of a favourite the honour of his crown and the welfare of his people, brings matters to this dilemma; he either sets a small value upon what he confides to his favourite, or he ascribes to his own choice the power of transforming the souls of men, as if he were able to mould a statesman or an hero out of a superannuated slave or a youthful profligate.

That, said Tiberius, would be an attempt of the most absurd futility; but employments abound in all states, which may be competently filled by men of very ordinary talents.

Not a single employment, replied Belisarius, which does not demand, if not an
able,

able, at least an honest man; but royal favour is little solicitous about the one or the other: on the contrary, both are neglected, or, still worse, they are sure to meet all the little indignities of a scornful repulse. Hence every talent dies in its bloom, and every virtue withers in the bud. Of talents and of virtues emulation is the vivifying soul; but partiality is immediate death. The state in which this vice prevails may be compared to those waste and desolate tracts, where certain useful plants spontaneously shoot up, but are robbed of their nutriment by the briers and brambles that infest the land: and yet this image of physical evil does not fully express the political mischief; for under a reign of favouritism, the briers and the brambles are cherished, while every salutary plant is eradicated and trampled under foot.

You seem to assume, said Tiberius, that the royal favour invariably wants a due discernment of spirits, and is never able to make a right choice of men.

Rarely, if ever, replied Belisarius, inasmuch that if the servants of the public were chosen by lot, it would be a more infallible mode of election. Partiality grants its favours to those only who intrigue for them: but merit disdains the little arts of intrigue; and that manly pride is decyphered by court interpreters into neglect of the sovereign,

who therefore repays it with calm disdain, while the assiduity of low ambition reaps every advantage. To a prince thus prejudiced, what access can there be for the sage or the hero? Can they degrade themselves to the pliancy of slaves? Can dignity of mind submit to be a cringing candidate for court-favour? If nobility of birth gives a title to approach the person of the sovereign, what part is to be acted in a circle of favourites, by truth, integrity, and honour? Are they likely to excel in the dexterities of flattery and dissimulation? Will they condescend to pry into the passions of their master, and explore the secret propensities of his heart? The characters of the sycophant, the dissembler, and the false friend, will be better played by others, who know how to touch the string that sounds gratefully to the royal ear, and to fly over that which will offend. Virtue would appear awkward in the attempt. The favourite will acquit himself with grace in all these particulars, but still it will ever be a million to one that he is unworthy of the distinction he enjoys.

The favourite of a discerning, just, and equitable prince, interposed the emperor, will, most probably, be a man of integrity.

In the court of a discerning, just, and equitable prince, replied Belisarius, there will be no such person as a favourite; such
a prince

a prince will be worthy of friends, and he will have them : but favour will do nothing for them. A faithful servant would blush to be so enriched. If ever there was a faithful servant, the emperor Trajan had such an one to boast of in his minister Longinus. That true and worthy friend of his master was taken prisoner by the Dacians : the king of that people signified to the emperor, that, unless he acceded to the conditions of peace proposed to him, the captive minister should be put to death. And what was Trajan's answer ? He left it to the honour of Longinus to decide, as Regulus had formerly done in his own case. Behold there the model of public characters ! Those are the men I have in view ! How glorious to be the friend of such a prince ! Longinus saw the bright occasion, and with a sublime of virtue dispatched himself, lest pity should take possession of the emperor, and incline him to an act of partiality or personal regard.

I am overpowered by the weight of your reasonings, said Tiberius : yes, I now perceive, that the public weal, when rightly understood, gives no latitude to the affections of the sovereign : but are there not incidents unconnected with the interests of the people, in which he may reasonably give a scope to his private affections ?

I answer in the negative, replied Belisarius: the prince has no positive unconnected interest; every thing is relative to the whole. The smallest matters are of importance, and even the very civilities of a king must be addressed with caution. Royal favour, it has been said, is but a partial evil, and displays itself only in little things; but a deviation from the strict rule of right, even in trifles, will soon become habitual, and from small irregularities to great excess the progress is rapid. The circle of the sovereign's favour enlarges itself, and to bask in the sunshine of his smiles, grows a general desire; each courtier strives to wriggle himself into favour; and the fence thus thrown down, how shall a prince resist the ardor of importunity, and the frequency of solicitation? The fence that should guard him, my best Tiberius, is a determination of the will to be always just and good. When a principle of uprightness is known to guide the choice of men, it must then be merit, and merit alone, that can hope for preferment. Talents, exalted qualities, and eminent services, form the only admissible claim: the candidate for honours must render himself worthy of them. Intrigue is discountenanced, and emulation is animated. Ambition is obliged to proceed by manly ways, and starting at the thought of being detected,

detected, abandons her little schemes of
 perfidy and cunning. How different is the
 case, when the prince is under the influ-
 ence of personal affection? To gain the
 ascendant over that affection, becomes the
 business of all. He who possesses the arts
 of insinuation, and knows how to cabal
 with the servants of upper servants, pur-
 sues his drudgery through all its stages, and
 creeps up to preferment, meanly rising to
 splendid infamy. In the mean time the
 man of virtuous pride retires, and with the
 consent of all, he is resigned to oblivion. If
 it should happen, that for some important
 service, he is called from obscurity, to make
 one in the glittering crowd; or if it should
 be necessary to employ him on some occa-
 sion worthy of his abilities; standing un-
 connected with faction, he finds all parties
 combined against him, till at length it is
 visible, that he must either debase himself,
 by countermining the dark deeds of his
 enemies, or else surrender to them at dis-
 cretion. The court where intrigue pre-
 vails, is a wild uproar of passions, in which
 the still voice of truth can never be heard.
 The public good is an unregarded thing,
 and personal affection is the fountain of all
 praise and censure; partiality passes its de-
 cisions upon all occurrences; and the prince,
 encompassed round with falsehoods, dis-
 tracted with doubt, suspicion and mistrust,

scarcely ever puts an end to the waverings of his mind, but to terminate in error.

Why does not he depend upon the evidence of facts? said Tiberius; facts are obstinate witnesses, and the testimony they give, is bold and loud.

Facts, replied Belisarius, are not so obstinate as you may imagine; they take a new complexion from the contrariety of reporters. Every enterprize is judged by its event; and yet events too frequently give the palm to rashness, and defeat the best concerted schemes of genius and ability. Men are often more fortunate than wise, and there are occasions when the proposition is reversed. In either case, the characters of men may suffer much from prejudice, and that more particularly in a court, where the colours of good and evil are all derived from the prevailing opinions of party and faction.

Justinian, in his old age, is a melancholy example, said the emperor; he has been cruelly deceived!

Alas! replied Belisarius, who has more reason than myself to know what has been practised upon the credulity of Justinian? Who is better acquainted with the snares that faction laid for him? It was faction sent Narses into Italy, to interrupt the prosperity of Belisarius. The emperor little imagined that a minister of the finances would

would be a dangerous rival of the general: but Narses had his faction at court, and he soon found one in the camp; a spirit of dissension prevailed, and Milan, the bulwark of Italy, was lost. Narses was recalled, but too late; the tide of success was now ebbing away: Milan had been sacked, her inhabitants put to the sword, and all Liguria dismembered from the empire. That Narses was pardoned by the emperor, I most heartily rejoice; for the life of so great a man, † we have one obligation, at least, to the decline of all military discipline. In the virtuous days of the republic, for the complicated crimes of disobedience, and the seduction of part of my army, Narses would have atoned with his head. I was recalled in my turn. To succeed me in the command of the army, eleven chiefs, all jealous of each other, were appointed by a new-fangled party. Discord prevailed in their councils, and they were defeated. By this means, we lost all Italy. The command was transferred to me, but I was a general without an army. I was obliged to traverse over Thrace and Illyria in quest of soldiers. A scanty number, not exceeding four thousand, was collected together. With this rash-levied
body,

† *In Bello qui rem a duce prohibitam fecit, aut mandata non servavit, capite punitur, etiamsi rem bene gesserit.* Pand. Lib. 49. Tit. 16.

body, who had neither cloaths, horses, arms, or provisions, I marched into Italy. In this condition, what was to be done? With the utmost difficulty, I prevented Rome from falling into the hands of the enemy. The cabal at court rejoiced at this disastrous prospect of affairs: Things are going as we could wish, said they; he is in the last extremity, merely standing at bay a little, to be presently overwhelmed in ruin. Amidst the desolation of their country, I was the only object of their attention: to see my ruin accomplished, they would have compounded to see the state shook to its foundations. I demanded a supply of men, and I was recalled. Narses, with a powerful army, was appointed to succeed me; and, beyond all question, Narses had abilities to justify the choice. That he was named to the command, was perhaps a public benefit; but before I was wounded, the common-wealth received a stab: the ruin of Belisarius was purchased at the expence of the state. There lies the mischief of party. To raise or overturn a single man, an entire army, perhaps an empire, must be sacrificed.

Alas! exclaimed Justinian, I now perceive the treacherous arts by which your glory was obscured. What an indelible stain to the emperor, thus to have believed the suggestions of your enemies!

My

My good neighbour, replied Belisarius, you are little aware of the refinement which court policy has acquired in the arts of destruction ; you do not know the genius of intrigue, how active it is, how persevering, how assiduous, and implacable. Respectful and obsequious to the sentiments of the sovereign, it manages with caution, and works its effect by degrees, like the drop of water that only oozes at first through its fence, saps on by imperceptible strokes, and then in one rushing torrent bears down all. Cabal and Party have this further advantage on their side, that the man of honour is without mistrust, and of course without precaution : he has nothing to oppose to the malice of his enemies, but his upright conduct, which is ever discoloured by envy, and his honest fame, of which the report that rings throughout the realm, expires and dies away at the gates of the palace. Envy alone is privileged within the verge of the court, and the character against which her shafts are aimed, is sure to fall a victim. In the course of human contingencies it cannot otherwise happen, but that every commander must experience the vicissitudes of fortune, and find his train of victory sometimes interrupted ; of every casualty Envy takes advantage, and makes even accidents a ground of impeachment. Has the commander

mander done all that was possible? He ought to have done better ; any body but himself would have acted upon a different plan ; he did not make a right use of his opportunities. The charge against him is aggravated, and the good he has done dwindles into nothing. The result is, that the man who can be useful to his country, is the most dangerous person in it. To the misfortune of the public, his downfall is effected ; and to their greater misfortune, some worthless wretch is sure to rise upon his ruins. Another concomitant evil is, the impression made upon the minds of men, by the melancholy prospect of virtue in distress, and of vice exulting in prosperity. Public spirit grows languid at the reflection, that all the fine incentives of honour are extinguished ; guilt is emboldened, the evil conscience forgets to blush, and excesses of every kind riot with impunity. Such are the evils that attend a reign of favouritism. Judge yourself, how such a disposition may precipitate the ruin of the state.

Without doubt, said Justinian, it is the most dangerous infirmity that ever byassed the mind of a prince ; but in an old man, who for thirty years has struggled to no purpose in the storms of fortune, and at last, in spite of all his efforts, sees the tempest ready to burst in ruin on his head : in
one

one thus worn out with age and troubles, may it not be deemed an excusable weakness, if he endeavours to sweeten his cares, or at least to alleviate them, by indulging the private affections? It will answer no purpose to be too sanguine in our hopes; let us not deceive ourselves with flattering ideas of the public condition: even now the empire by its own weight is tottering to its fall. By a length of duration all its vigour is exhausted, and it must share at last the common fate which brought the empires of Belus and Cyrus to their dissolution. Like them it has flourished in splendor, and like them it must moulder into ruin.

I am no fatalist, replied Belisarius, in regard to revolutions of government: that would be to give a sanction to our present degeneracy of spirit, and make despair systematical. That all sublunary things, and kingdoms amongst them, perish and die away, I am not now to learn; but that nature has traced the bounds of existence to all its productions seems a position rather problematical. The body natural indeed has its period when the animal functions decay, and calmly we welcome death; but there never does occur a moment, in which it is allowed us to despair of the commonwealth. The body-politic, it must not be dissembled, is subject to convulsions that shake its frame, to slow disorders that consume

sume its vigour, and to spasms that elevate for a while, to plunge it into deeper dejection afterwards. Activity, it is true, strains all its efforts; repose is apt to relax; and civil contention breaks the constitutional strength: but not one of these accidents is mortal in its nature. Nations have been saved from the very brink of destruction; they have emerged from the very depth of misery; and after struggling through the severest crisis have been reanimated to a vigour unknown before. The declension of states is not therefore marked out; the line is not drawn, like the limits of human life. Old age is unknown to the body-politic; it is the chimera of mistaken theorists. The same ardour of hope that inspirits the heart of valour, may extend its influence, and give animation for any length of time. The constitution of the empire is now enfeebled, or rather it has sunk into a languid state: but for every poison there is an antidote in nature, and it behoves us to discern it.—Let us investigate it together, said the emperor; there will be something soothing in the research: but before we think of the remedy, let us trace the disorder to its first principles.—I am willing to enter into the discussion, replied Belisarius, and it will furnish us ample matter for our future meetings.

CHAP. XI.

THE next day, Justinian was impatient to see Belisarius. He longed to have the veil torn off which hid the lurking mischiefs of the empire, and he pressed with eagerness to the interview. Belisarius dated his reflections from the æra of Constantine. How much is it to be lamented, said the hero, that so enlarged a genius, with all that firmness, that spirit of enterprize, should egregiously mistake the fitness of the means to produce the end desired, and exert for the extinction of the empire more vigour and activity, than would have been necessary to retrieve its ancient honours! His new system of government was a master-stroke of human wit: the Prætorian bands abolished; the children of the poor and helpless adopted by the state*; the authority of the prefect distributed into more hands, † and weakened of course; the lands upon the frontiers assigned to the veteran soldiers, who formed an Agrarian army for the

* When the parent was unable to maintain his child, the state took the charge upon itself, and the infant was educated at the expence of the public: and this law Constantine directed to be engraved on marble, that he might perpetuate it through all successive ages.

† Zosim. lib. ii. cap. 33.

the defence of the empire ; this was indeed a wise institution, a large and comprehensive policy. Why did not he adhere entirely to a plan so just and simple ? He did not see, or he was unwilling to see, that, to transplant the seat of empire, it must be torn up by the very roots. In vain did he propose to himself that the city he was founding should be a second Rome ; in vain was the latter despoiled of its richest ornaments for the decoration of the former : it was a mere theatrical shifting of scenery, the gaudy spectacle of a pantomime.

You astonish me, said Tiberius, interrupting him ; I was used to think the capital of the world more advantageously situated upon the Bosphorus, in the middle of two seas, and between Europe and Asia, than in the heart of Italy, upon the banks of a river, which scarce deserves the name of navigable.

Constantine thought as you do, replied Belisarius, and he was mistaken. The state which is obliged to carry war into foreign territories, must be governed by a sound internal policy, compact within itself, and easy to be defended. Such was the advantage of Italy. The hand of nature seemed to have made it a residence for the masters of the world. The mountains and the sea, which inclose it, formed a strong barrier against invasion : guard but the Alps, and Rome was guarded too. If that fence proved too
weak

weak to repel the enemy, the Appennines afforded a safe retreat, and served as a rampart to half Italy. It was there that Camillus gave the Gauls a signal overthrow; and in that spot Narfes obtained his brilliant victory over Totila.

At present the empire has no fixed immoveable centre; but lies open and exposed to all the assaults of fortune. Ask the Scythian, the Sarmatian, and the Sclavonian, whether the Heber, the Danube, and the Tanais, are barriers to obstruct their march? On that side Byzantium is our only fence; that its walls are not in due repair is not the circumstance that grieves me most.

When Rome was the seat of empire, the established policy of government was able to carry the vigour of its laws from the centre to the extremity of the state: all Italy was under its immediate influence, within the reach of the administration: the law gave the tone to the manners, and the manners in their turn made grave and faithful ministers of justice. We have indeed now the same institutions; but as all is transplanted from the place of its growth, the consequence is, that every thing droops, as if regretting its native soil. The empire is not collected in itself, as it was before: it is enlarged, and thereby weakened. The national character has lost its spirit: even the endearing name of Country is gone from

from amongst us. Italy was renowned for men who imbibed with their first breath the love of their country, and grew to manhood amidst the exercises of the *Campus Martius*. At present, where is the cradle, and where the school of warriors? The Dalmatians, the Illyrians, and the Thracians, who are now mingled with us, are in fact as foreign as the Numidians and the Moors. No common interest to unite them in one common cause, no kindred spirit to actuate and inspire them. *Remember that you are Romans*, said a commander to his soldiers, in the days of the old republic; and that short harangue was of efficacy to brace their nerves for labour, and to render them invincible in battle. What animating topic have we to insist upon? Shall we say, *Remember that you are Armenians, Numidians, or Dalmatians?* We are no longer one body-politic, and there lies the cause of our debility. The projectors of our new settlement were not aware that to form that coalition, that unity of interests, which we call our country, requires the progressive toil of ages, the slow and imperceptible working of sentiment, habit, and opinion. Our new city was embellished by Constantine with statues of Roman heroes; but alas! the policy was ineffectual, for the men whose images we only saw, lived and breathed the flame of Liberty in the Capitol! The ge-
nius

nus that inspired them, did not embark on board our ships ; we imported inanimate marble only. Paulus Emilius, the Scipios, and the Catos, are silent here and mute ; they are foreigners at Byzantium ; but at Rome they harangued the people, and the people understood and felt them.

I do not perceive, said Justinian, but the empire, since the seat of government was removed, has enjoyed a truer state of peace and security, than it knew at Rome for a long series of years. The people there had fallen into degeneracy, and the senate sunk deeper in shame and servitude.

When the administration is confided to improper hands, replied Belisarius, the strength and dignity of every state will be impaired, and a train of calamities must ensue. At Rome, however, nothing but one good reign was wanting to recal the constitution to its first principles. Take a view of Adrian's administration : the state seemed under him to rise out of its ruins. Behold Marcus Aurelius upon the throne : to what an height of glory and magnificence was the condition of the empire raised by the conduct of that excellent prince ! Roman virtue has been often eclipsed, but not extinguished : whenever a prince appeared of a genius to rekindle the spirit of his country, the latent fire was always ready to mount into a blaze. But alas ! every principle

ciple of virtue is now destroyed : the seed must be sown again ; and that must be the arduous task of a long reign, founded in justice, moderation, and wisdom. Nothing but a prodigy of this sort can redeem us in this juncture. Our very victories may be the ruin of the state. We have an hundred enemies to cope with, and those enemies have but one. An idea is conceived that they may be all subdued ; and yet one is no sooner crushed, but he rises again ; a fresh foe is ever ready to find us employment, and by a rapidity of succession, they give breathing-time to each other. By this diversion of our arms a constant alarm is kept up, and the state, thus distracted, grows feeble every day. The march of armies to various and distant places consumes our strength ; the vigour of our measures strains every nerve, to relax us more in the end ; and every victory is a wound which has not time to close. Thus, after an exertion of all the powers of the empire to maintain its own importance, a single day shall shake it to its foundation, and render the labour of twenty years abortive in a single hour. Recollect how often, under the present reign, our standard has been hurried about the world, from the Tiber to the Euphrates, and from the Euphrates to the Danube ! And now what is the consequence ? what is the fruit of so many victories, under
Mundus

Mundus, Germanicus, Salomon, Narses, and myself, if I may be added to the number? A peace is all we have obtained at last.

And if our victories exhaust us, said the emperor, it is right to bring things to that conclusion.

To buy a peace, replied Belisarius, is not the way to prevent the calamities of war. The savage of the North has nothing in view but booty; and if he is sure of gaining it, his motive to frequent incursions grows the stronger. The Persian need only spread an alarm every year through our fairest provinces in Asia, and he goes back loaded with our money. A new way of exterminating the plunderer, by holding forth the booty that invites him! The price of peace becomes the principle of war; and our emperors, by exhausting their subjects, have pampered and inflamed the avarice of their enemies.

You affect me deeply, said Justinian; what bulwark would you oppose to the invasions of the enemy?—A good army, replied Belisarius; and, above all, a people free and happy. When the barbarians rush into our provinces, they are attracted by the love of plunder; and though they leave desolation and hatred behind them, yet their purpose is answered if they leave impressions of terror also. The case is different

with an empire that would maintain its possessions in security. If it does not endear its government to mankind, it may as well abdicate; for it is a self-evident proposition, that all authority founded on fear will grow weak at every remove from the capital, till at last, fading by degrees, it is lost in distance. To rule by the medium of fear from Taurus to the Alps, and from Caucasus to the foot of Atlas, is an impossibility in politics. If the subject groans under the weight of his grievances, and power supports itself by the sweat of his brow, of what moment is it to him whether Romans or Persians are his oppressors? The authority that burdens us will never be well defended; and the nation that has not spirit to resist oppression, will crouch with tame acquiescence under the first deliverer that appears. Would you give stability to government? lay your foundation in the affections of mankind; and the affections of mankind are ever attached to the principles of humanity, of beneficence, integrity, public faith, and zeal for the happiness of millions. Those are the virtues that command a willing people. The spirit of the constitution is then diffused over the whole dominion, alive and active in each distant part; the people are all as one hand and one heart, and every province is the seat of government.

I shall

I shall have frequent occasion to allude to myself, continued Belisarius; and, my worthy young man, said he to Tiberius, by appealing to my experience you have made all apology for egotism unnecessary. When I had the conduct of the war in Africa, I considered those regions as part of my native country. The regular and strict discipline, which I established throughout my army, procured the good-will of mankind, and attracted plenty from every quarter. In a little time I had the satisfaction of seeing my camp resorted to as a sanctuary by every various people, who crowded to my standard and listed under me. The day which saw me enter Carthage at the head of a victorious army, did not hear a single groan: neither the quiet nor the usual employments of the citizens suffered on the occasion: industry and commerce pursued their interests, as if it had been a time of profound peace; and in return for this benefit felt by all orders of men, it was in my power to become the king of a people who called me their common father. The same happened to me in Italy: there the native inhabitants gathered about me in crowds, resigning themselves to the empire; and at Ravenna I received the supplications of the Goths imploring their conqueror to be their sovereign. Behold here the influence, the em-

pire of humanity. Do not suspect that I am here my own panegyrist: all my merit consisted in following the lessons the very barbarians gave me. Yes, even the barbarians can boast their Titus and their Marcus Aurelius. Theodoric and Totila deserved the love of human kind. Ye cities of Italy! exclaimed Belisarius, what a contrast have you seen between us and the barbarians! At Naples in particular, my eyes beheld men, women, and children, slaughtered in one common carnage. I flew to their assistance: I snatched the unhappy, the innocent victims from the fury of an incensed soldiery: but I was single in opposition to them, and my entreaties were lost in air: the men whose duty it was to second me, were intent on plunder. The same place was reduced by the generous Totila. Thrice-happy prince! he had the glory of saving it from the ravage of his troops. His deportment was that of a tender father in the midst of his family. Humanity cannot display a scene more truly pathetic than this generous prince exerting his best offices for the protection of a people that surrendered to his arms. It was the same at Rome; that very Rome which saw the officers of the empire, in the midst of all the horrors of a famine, carrying on the detestable trade of a monopoly. It was in this manner our enemies conciliated the affections

fections of mankind. Their justice and moderation hurt us more than their valour.

How, on our part, did we counteract their virtues? In no shape whatever: the inhumanity, the avarice, and tyranny of our commanders leagued with the enemy, and served their cause. I had no sooner resigned the command in Italy, than the same Goths, whose proffered crown I had just refused, with one general consent, with a kind of epidemic spirit, kindled to indignation by the malversation of those who succeeded me, resolved at once to shake off the yoke. Hence the reign of Totila, and all the misfortunes of Italy. When I had subdued the Vandals, it was my ambition to settle terms of amity between the empire and the Moors; and I thought I had succeeded to my satisfaction: but my back was scarcely turned when our honourable plunderers, our chiefs, who made war a gainful trade, our illustrious sons of riot and rapacity, infringed every treaty I had made, and let loose the most horrible violence to pillage their cities and desolate their fields. By desperation the Moors were soon roused to vengeance, and our provinces were deluged with blood. From oppression sprung revolt, and all the bands of peace were rent asunder.

From the same causes in the heart of the empire the same effects have been produ-

ced. Imbecility in ministers, avarice in proconsuls, inhumanity and despotism in the governors of cities and of provinces ; these are the enormities which I have seen in every quarter. To these it is owing, that every department of government is now become an intolerable charge to the people. In order to enforce a passive obedience under the burthen, recourse is had to measures of the most grievous nature : the militia has been abolished, and the subject has been excluded from the sacerdotal order ; nay, the right of alienating their property has been wrested from them ; and, to crown the whole with what will scarcely be believed, they are deprived of the miserable liberty of becoming bondmen. Can it be expected that, harrassed thus cruelly, the people will be reconciled to the yoke that galls them ? Can there exist in their idea any ties of interest, or of duty, between them and their oppressors ? The burst of every groan that despair and misery extort, is instantly proclaimed treason ; and armies are marched to carry fire and sword through the provinces. A new and cruel way of reducing mankind to obedience by their total ruin ! and then, of what use are subjects thus reduced, and broken-hearted under a load of grievances ? A well-governed people should be at once both spirited and complying ; and both these qualities would unite, were they

they not prevented by the pride and arrogance of little tyrants, who too often make the reign of a well-disposed prince an odious system of cruelty and arbitrary power.

It is upon ministers, and all the little substitutes of authority, that a sovereign must depend for the love or the hatred of mankind. He ought therefore to watch them with a careful and a jealous eye. They are too often the most cruel enemies he has; for of all the evils that can attend a prince, the aversion of his people is the worst, and yet that is brought upon him by his officers of state. Whatever they dare for the gratification of spleen, pride, avarice, and their mean capricious passions, it is all, in ministerial language, the direction of the sovereign; it is for the support of government. Though they are the planners of every pernicious project, yet, in carrying it into execution, they are, if you will believe them, but servants of the crown; and thus the prince is made the involuntary unconscious scourge of a people he loves. My dear Tiberius, continued the hero, if ever your royal master has the happiness of embracing you as his friend, let it be your advice never to slacken the reins of authority, that all who are under it may feel the curb of justice. Every act of petty tyranny committed in the name of the prince, is sure to sully the lustre of his crown with the tears of the

afflicted. An evil administration is a libel upon the character of the sovereign. But when iniquity is controuled, when corruption is checked, and the grievances of the subject redressed by a patriot prince, the complaints of injured men will indeed be addressed to the throne, but no murmurings against it will ever be heard. The indignation of the subject will be pointed at its proper object; it will pursue the authors of public mischief, while the good and upright sovereign still possesses the affections of a grateful people.

There is nothing, interposed Justinian, more beautiful in theory, than a prince attending to the movements of every minute wheel in the great machine of government. But the objects are too complicated, and he would be distracted by the multiplicity of views. To hear the complaints of the subject, and to examine things to the bottom, so as to decide in all cases with justice and moderation, would indeed be an illustrious task, but it is greatly above the powers of any prince whatever.

Those are the phantoms of difficulty, replied Belisarius, that are conjured up to deter him from the task; but those phantoms, when examined with a stedfast eye, discover themselves to be mere mockery, and they vanish. The art of governing, we shall see to-morrow, is by no means so complicated;

as politic men would make us believe. Farewel, my friends. You see how, of my own accord, I now engage myself more deeply in this discussion than I at first intended. To rule ideal kingdoms is a kind of castle-building which the imagination of man is fond of indulging; and there are few, I believe, who in their visionary reign and their dreams of power, do not, like myself, think themselves capable of regulating the fate of empires. Political theories, said Justinian, are often the delirious chimeras of the vulgar, but they are, at the same time, the noble speculations of the sage and the philosopher.

The emperor withdrew, deeply impressed with the reflections and the reasonings he had heard. That very night at supper, it was observed by his courtiers, that the state never knew a better or more flourishing condition. Without doubt, said Justinian, addressing himself to the flattering train, the empire must be in a flourishing way, for you riot in abundance; it must be happy also, for you are dissolved in ease and luxury. The people, in your estimate, pass for a mere cypher, and the court with you is deemed the empire. At these words they all looked down discountenanced. The remark of the emperor was thought to proceed from that spleen which had of late overcast his mind, and which they all agreed,

was entirely occasioned by his late conferences with Tiberius. Tiberius, said they, is a young zealot, whose imagination is overheated with the enthusiasm of virtue and popular humanity. A man of that character is always dangerous at court; he must be removed from the emperor's presence.

C H A P. XII.

THE next day, while the new intrigue at court was hatching its designs, the blind old hero, and his two guests, resumed the thread of their discourse.

The sovereign, said Belisarius, who means to be a real, and not a nominal prince, ought to know how to reduce things to their most simple principles. His first care should be to inform himself of the true interests of his people, and the conduct they expect he should observe. † That alone, said Tiberius, is a large field of contemplation.—But it is not a perplexed contemplation, said Belisarius; nothing can be more simple; for the wants of an individual are the wants of all, and each of us knows intuitively, what is good and fit for the whole human species. As for instance, said

† *Semper officio fungitur, utilitati hominum consulens at societati.*

Cicero de Off. 3.

said he to the young man, if it were your lot to be employed in the labours of husbandry, what would you expect from the benevolence of your sovereign?—I should expect, answered Tiberius, security for the fruits of my industry, and an unmolested right, after the dues of the crown were paid, to enjoy my gettings with my wife and children. I should desire to be protected in my property against fraud and rapine, and to see myself and my family safe from violence, injustice, and oppression.—Very well! replied Belisarius; in that consists the whole: every citizen, according to his distinctive rank, requires the same, and nothing more. Now the prince, on his part, continued Belisarius, what does he demand of his subjects?—Obedience to his laws, necessary supplies, and a proper force to support his own dignity, and the authority of Government.—That again is simple and just, said Belisarius. With regard now to the people in their relation to one another, what are their reciprocal duties?—To live in peace and harmony, to injure no man, to leave to every one the quiet possession of his own, and in all transactions to preserve an honest intercourse and good faith.—In that state of the case, my worthy friend, said Belisarius, we have an epitome of human happiness: for that end you see that law has no need.

to be voluminous. Twelve tables, at one time, comprized the laws of Rome; and that time was at least as eligible as the present. What we call just, is the ballance of what is useful, and the liquidation of what is coming to each individual from the aggregate of public good. Let equity adjust this account, and the code which directs it, need not be long. But equity is now embroiled with complications, that have swelled to an unwieldy size. This mischief is owing to the capricious detail of an arbitrary disposition, which sets up its own caprice in the place of law, and then makes the law as vague and uncertain as that very caprice itself: it is owing to a poor pusillanimity, that with solicitude is ever inventing new snares to entangle civil liberty: it is owing to the pride and jealousy of power, which never thinks it can make its weight sufficiently felt: and in short, it is owing to a vain desire of superintending a multiplicity of minute objects, which would all work themselves clear, and be properly adjusted without any such superintendence. A digest has been made in the present reign of edicts and decrees without number; but after all, it is the school for lawyers, and not for the people; whereas it is the people who ought to be instructed in their duties and their rights. Every citizen ought, in the first instance,

to

to be his own judge: it is fit, therefore, that every citizen should know distinctly and with precision what is prescribed,† forbid, and permitted by the law. To this end there need only be a few good laws, simple, clear, sensible, and easy in their application to the actions of men. This would facilitate the administration of justice, and abridge the detail of subtleties that now entangle it. For when the rights and the duties annexed to civil conduct, are universally felt and understood, the subject exults in his security, and acquiesces in subordination: he perceives the ascertained degree of political liberty, which he gains in return for the resignation of his natural privileges to the authority of the state; and finding his own private advantage in the public safety, he learns to reverence the wisdom of that institution, which has united both in so beautiful a connection. I would ask to what reason is it to be assigned, that the subject is so often refractory to the authority of government? It is because the laws, which limit and abridge the liberty of the people, are ever expounded with rigour; while, on the other hand, those which favour natural freedom, receive too often a negligent, a temporizing construction. But this abuse would

† *Legis virtus hæc est, imperare, vetare, permittere, punire.* Pand. Lib. 1. T. 3.

would be effectually remedied by the fair simplicity of a popular code, or a system adapted to the capacity of the whole community; from whence it would result, that the judges, observing mankind sufficiently instructed in the rules of right, nay in a capacity to appeal from them to a known, precise, and determinate law, would be upon their guard not to make it comply with occasions, or to vary the spirit of it according to their own discretion.

Of laws, which are designed to entrrench upon the rights of the subject, those that fasten upon property are the worst, and most liable to abuse. They are not indeed levelled at the lives and liberties of the people; but the hands of the people are never tied up, but with an intention to plunder them. Of the excesses, moreover, committed by the officers of the revenue, there is scarcely ever one that does not involve in it the crime of avarice. This then is the first object to which the sovereign's eye should be directed; it should be his first care to establish the collection of his taxes upon the clearest and most intelligible system. While imposts are multiplied, and the laws * that establish the taxation, continue vague, complex, and uncertain;

* *Sub imperatoribus vestigalia, non lege ac ratione, sed arbitratiu imperatorum processerunt. Buling. De tribut. ac vestig. P. R.*

uncertain; the administration of this whole department will ever be captious, fraudulent, and oppressive. These laws, therefore, must be rendered as simple as possible; they must be penned with accuracy and precision; and the tax itself, that indispensable demand of government *, should be equal, easy, and founded in the fitness of things: it should be one general impost, though varied in its application to sundry wise and good purposes; and finally, it should be uniform throughout the realm, like the tribute or tythe which Sicily † paid with pleasure to the Romans, or like that which was levied in Asia, ‡ in proportion to the annual increase or loss, and gained for Cæsar, the author of it, the affections of mankind. Were the finances thus regulated, Fraud would not be able to entrench itself in the labyrinths of law, and the || absurdity of edicts: but the right established upon clear and simple principles,

* *Quoniam neque quies sine armis, neque utrumque sine tributis haberi possunt.* Liv. lib. i.

† *Omnis ager Siciliae Decumanus.* Buling. ubi supra.

‡ *Vide App. De bello civ. lib. 5. Pro anni copiâ vel inopiâ, uberius (ex Asia) vel angustius vectigal exactum est.* Dio. lib. 45.

|| *The emperors laid a duty upon urine, dust, ordure, dead bodies, smoke, air, &c. There were rights of the turf, the highway, storage, duties upon carriages, beasts of burthen, &c. et quæ alia (says Tacitus) exactionibus illicitis nomina publicani invenerunt.* Vide Buling. ubi supra.

principles, would carry the clearest evidence of truth along with it, and that truth would draw the line to circumscribe the power of the officers. Thus the laws of taxation, by ceasing to be arbitrary, would cease to be detestable.

You are aware, said the emperor, of the reasoning that encounters these principles : make taxation simple, and you reduce it at the same time.—I wish to do so, replied Belisarius.—But, resumed Justinian, if the people are left too much at ease, by a natural consequence they grow lazy, arrogant, rebellious, and untractable.—Gracious Heaven ! exclaimed Belisarius ; will assuring to men the fruits of their labour, give them an aversion from industry ? Will men become rebels, because their happiness is secured and promoted ? But the fear is, that they will prove arrogant ! Alas ! I know that little tyrants would be glad to see them crouch like slaves under the master's lash. But I would desire to know, to whom should the subject bend, while his conduct is free from reproach or guilt ? There is no power on earth, but that of the laws and of the legal sovereign, to which an honest member of society owes any deference. I would ask further, Will usurpation be as sure of having obedience paid to it, as will that mild authority, which creates for itself a kind of paternal empire over the hearts of men,

men, by works of beneficence, and by generous deeds that call for gratitude, affection, and esteem? Believe me, I know the character of the people: they are not what they are represented. Are they dispirited, nay disaffected? It is owing to their grievances. Is their temper sowered? and are they grown reluctant to command? It is because they find themselves for ever acquiring, and never sure of possessing. In sober sadness, this is the truth: but it is discoloured with art; designing men dogmatize on the subject, and they endeavour to give their falsehood the air and sanction of appearing systematical. The principle upon which they ground themselves, is, that the race of man lives in subserviency to a very small part of the species, and that the world was made for the use of themselves and a few leading men.—It is an inconceivable pride, said Justinian, and yet a pride too common to the human mind.—Not so common as you imagine, replied Belisarius; we hear it indeed often, but it is from men who are acting a part; it is a sort of paradox in politics that never had one sincere believer. I will venture to say, there never yet existed a person of common-sense, however eminent his station, who, upon a comparative view of himself and the people, who support, who nourish, and defend him, did not shrink back with humility into himself; for he feels his imbecillity, his
necessi-

necessities, and his state of dependence. His pride is a mask, a mere assumed character; but the mischief is, he is so practised in the character, that he has learned to play it well, and to impose upon his audience. May Heaven preserve your royal friend, my worthy Tiberius, from this fatal illusion! That he may be effectually preserved from it, direct his attention to the early periods and primitive condition of civil society: he will then observe three classes of men, each subsisting in a state of reciprocal aid and dependance: the husbandman, in the first place, employed in the cultivation of the earth for the support of life; the artificer, secondly, whose occupation it was to give to the materials of the earth their relative forms and fitness for use; and, thirdly, the statesman, or able politician, who consecrated himself to the arts of government for the good order and well-being of society. In this federal union not one of the parties is useless or inactive: the advantage of mutual succour is circulated in full exertion through all the members, according to the powers of each; and thus bodily force, labour, and industry, intellectual ability, the faculties of the mind, superior talents, and eminent virtues, all conspire and act in concert for the general good. This order of things, simple, natural, and regular as it may appear, is the true analysis

sis of government : these are the original forms into which political œconomy must resolve itself ; these the first principles to which it is reducible.

You cannot but observe what an outrage it would be against all good sense and order, if any one of these classes should revolt against the others : you must see that they are all equally dependant, and equally conducive to each other ; and that if a preference can be ascribed to any one in particular, it must to the husbandman, inasmuch as the support of life is the first great principle and desire of nature ; the art, therefore, that nourishes man must be the first of arts. But as this art accomplishes its end by methods easy and sure ; as it is exposed to no danger, and requires an exertion of the most common and ordinary powers ; it is right that the more delicate arts, which demand talents, virtues, and the most refined acquirements, should meet with the highest encouragement. For this reason, therefore, the arts that administer to the first wants of life, will not be held in the greatest estimation, and indeed they do not aspire to it. But inasmuch as it would be impolitic on the one hand, to over-rate them, so it would be unjust on the other, and repugnant to the interests of humanity, to degrade them into contempt.

Let

Let your friend, my good Tiberius, be upon his guard against the approaches of this stupid disdain : on the contrary, it will behove him to cherish, as the nurse of himself and of human kind, this too much despised, though excellent and beneficial branch of industry. It is just, in the arrangement of things, that the people should labour for the two other classes of society, which co operate with them for the good of the whole, and contribute largely to the support of that power which forms the defence of the community. The earth was ordained to supply the nurture of man, and to those who encrease its fertility, the first maintenance is due : this is justice to the husbandman ; and the state, in rating him to the charges of government, must be careful to lay the tax upon his redundances only. If the sole recompence of hard and unremitting labour were no more than the mere privilege of leading an undesirable and wretched life, the cultivators of the earth could no longer be deemed a part of the political association, but would remain in a state of slavery : their condition would be intolerable ; they would rush from their rank, turn order into anarchy, or else put a stop to the propagation of so many miserable beings, and so annihilate the rank itself.

It

* This was the maxim of Henry IV. of France ; and of all good kings.

It must be allowed, said Justinian, that they are too much depressed; but happily little is wanting to that race of men, enured as they are to penury and labour! Beyond the excitements of appetite and the first wants of nature their ambition never rises; let them have bread, and they have content along with it.

To say the truth, my good neighbour, replied Belisarius, one would imagine that you had lived your days in courts, for you are master of the language. What you have now advanced, rings for ever in the ear of a prince, that he may be the more readily induced to pillage his people, and that he may do it without remorse. The people, it is true, have not the inordinate wants, which luxury has created in the higher ranks of life; and therefore, they are more likely to be reasonable in their complaints and their demands. The more frugal and modest their way of life, the more sober and temperate their manners, the stronger is the presumption that when they remonstrate their grievances, they do it with sufficient provocation. In the court dictionary, to want the necessaries of life implies the want of ability to maintain twenty useless horses, and as many idle drones in livery: in the honest meaning of the simple husbandman, it is to want wherewithal to nourish a poor old father, bending under years and
in-

infirmities, to rear a little race of infants, whose feeble arms are yet unfit for work, and to comfort a virtuous wife, who is either breeding or nursing a new subject of the state ; it is, in plain rural language, to want these things, and to want, besides, the proper seeds to deposit in the ground, a well-stored granary against an hard season and a year of scarcity, and in age and in sickness the comforts, and the succours, which weary nature has occasion for. Oh ! my friends, is it not manifest that the fruits of agriculture are destined in the first place, and of justice due to those who labour to make the earth more productive ? The destination is holy, and should be kept more sacred and inviolable than all the treasure in the depositories of Janus.

Alas ! said the emperor, there are times of public calamity, when government may exert a dispensing power, and state-necessity is then the law which imposes new burthens and taxes on the people.

It should be a case of the last extremity indeed, replied Belisarius ; every superfluity should be first brought into the common stock, all resources should be exhausted, and no way left of saving the state but by the ruin of the people. That state-necessity I am a stranger to : the occasion for that dispensing power I have never seen *. But to

re-

* Marcus Aurelius, in a pressing exigence, rather than overload the people with new taxes, sold the

represent things in their true point of light ; do you know where the mischief lies, that makes the honest husbandman groan in misery ? It rests with that superior class, as it is called, who pass away the hours in idleness and riot : by them the whole burthen † is thrown upon honest industry. They reap almost all the advantages of the civil union, and yet contribute the least to its support ; they do nothing for the strength and dignity of the government, which gives them so much ease and enjoyment. They repay nothing for the benefits they receive, and yet in their case it seems a privileged, an honourable insolvency. Let this abuse be altogether reformed : let the necessary charge of government fall in just proportions upon every member of the community ; let it be diffused through all orders of men, according to the means and abilities of each, and the burthen will then be light and equitable.

What has not been attempted, said the emperor, in order to establish this just equality so much desired ? ‡ Have not the De-

curions, furniture of the imperial palace : *Vasa aurea, uxeriam ac suam sericam et auream vestem, multa ornamenta gemmarum ; ac per duos menses venditio habita est.* Aurel. Viët.

† *Inveniuntur plurimi divitum, quorum tributa populos necant.* Salv. lib. iv.

Proprietariis carent (pauperes) et vectigalibus obruantur. Idem. lib. v. *De Gub. Dei.*

‡ *Cod. Leg. de Annonâ.*

curious, who were base enough in the assessment of the cities committed to them, to over-rate some, in order to give undue exemptions to others ||, been adjudged by the law to be burnt alive ?

Alas ! replied Belisarius, I know that little favour is shewn to those unhappy wretches. For not sufficiently grinding the face of the poor, they are laid in irons, unmercifully scourged and buffeted, and persecuted under the name of Justice, with every barbarity, till they envy even the lot of slaves *. But for the regents of provinces, for proconsuls, and other ministers, are there rods and dungeons ready ? And supposing there were, of what use are pains and penalties, while the mouth of Complaint is stopped, and the cries of Misery are suffocated ? Let laws abate of their severity, so they have a free course, and injured men are permitted to prosecute their legal remedy.

The liberty to complain of grievances, said Justinian, has been the right of the people in all periods.

It has so, replied Belisarius, it is a constitutional right, but the exercise of it has depended upon the will and pleasure of subordinate tyrants. † Have not attempts been made to attach the persons of presidents and

|| *Cod. lib. i. de Censib.*

* *Traité de l'Orig. du pouv. Fr.*

† *Traité de l'Orig. du pouv. Fr.*

and prefects, that cities and provinces might be at liberty to appeal to the court for a redress of injuries, in which those very men were either principals or accomplices? And could any method be taken more sure of procuring impunity for the offenders? The law directs its ministers † to prevent violence and exactions; and those very ministers are the party accused. The law imposes a religious duty upon the governors of provinces ‡ to protect the weak from the oppression of the stronger; and those very governors have at once the means of oppressing, and even the power of doing it under the sanction of that very law which forbids them ||. The law defines the gross sum of the tax; but presidents and proconsuls make the assessment upon individuals †, and they never want sophistry to give a colour to their exactions. The law gives a right of citing the tools and little instruments of the governor before the governor himself*; but from his tribunal there lies no ‡ appeal to the sovereign, and

† *Illicitas exactiones, et violentias factas et extortas metu venditiones, &c. prohibeat præses provinciæ.* Pand. lib. i. tit. 18.

‡ *Ne potentiores viri humiliores injuriis afficiant, ad religionem præsidis provinciæ pertinet.* Ibid.

|| *Qui universas provincias regunt, jus gladii habent.* Ib.

† Novell. 28.

* *Det operam judex ut prætorium suum ipse componat.* Cod. Theod. lib. i. tit. 10.

‡ *Non potest a præfectis prætorio appellari. Credit enim princeps eos, qui ob singularem industriam, explora-*

this, we are told, is grounded upon a maxim, That the prince raises none to that high station, but men of approved wisdom and uprightness, who can do no wrong. But cannot the prince be deceived in his choice? To trust the welfare of a whole people to the promised faith of one man, is a monstrous absurdity in government. Justinian was aware of this, and to reform the abuse re-established the Prætorship, with full powers and instructions to enquire into the conduct and depredations of the governors †. But in doing this he created a new order of tyrants, whose residence in the provinces gave an opportunity to corruption to spread as it were by contagion, till they, who were meant to be the guardians of the people, became confederates in profligacy, and increased the number of vile usurpers. Hence the impunity with which vice lords it through the empire; hence too, the shameful imbecility of relaxed and ineffectual laws. ||

What

et eorum fide et gravitate ad ejus officii magnitudinem adhibentur non aliter judicatuross, pro sapientia ac luce dignitati, quam ipse foret judicaturus. Pand. lib. i. tit. 11.

† *Ut prætor prohibeat exactores tributorum suscipere et exequi mandata, quæ malo more a sede præfecti exeunt, de muris reficiendis, de viis sternendis, et aliis oneribus infinitis. Novell. 24.*

|| *Vide Pand. lib. xlviii. Leg. Jul. repetundarum; leg. Jul. de annonâ; leg. Jul. peculatus. Cod. Theod. lib. iv. tit. 12. Cod. Just. lib. i. De censib.*

What would you do in such a case, said the emperor? I would listen, replied Belisarius, to the outcries of the injured, and proud oppression should tremble for its guilt.

There is, among the various institutions established by the princes of the empire, one that I reverence, and fervently wish to see enforced according to the true principles and spirit of its design. When in the number of persons, to whom the authority of government is delegated, I perceived a set of officers sent into the provinces * with special powers to hear the complaints of the people, in order to transmit a memorial of grievances to the emperor, I felt my heart expand with the spirit of humanity. My vows are offered up, my constant prayers, that the prince may give that important office all its weight and dignity; that he may nominate to so glorious an employment his select and most virtuous friends, the men of approved integrity and honour; that amidst the awful pomp of religious ceremony, he may receive, at the foot of the altar, the solemn oath, by which the chosen patriots shall bind themselves to their prince, their country, and their God, never to betray the interests of the weak and helpless to the pride and arrogance of domineering spirits; that he may each year depute this

H 2

honest

* They were called CURIOSI.

honest band as the guardians of our civil rights ; and that he may, as soon as their high commission is executed, recal them to his presence, lest corruption have time to tamper with their virtue. Were things in this train, what glorious effects might be expected from such a visitation ! The consequences are now before my eyes ! Behold, on the arrival of the just and upright man, how Liberty rears its head in the provinces, and smiles content ! how Tyranny and Oppression look abashed and tremble ! Behold the governors, the proconsuls, and their deputies turn pale and shrink at the tribunal of their judge, who is surrounded by a grateful assembly of the people, and hailed as their father and their avenger ! It is the complaint of kings, that the Truth does not reach them ! But oh, my friends ! she endeavours to make her way to them, and even to break through their guards, in defiance of swords and peril. Yet how easy might the access be made ! It would not then be the seditious outcry of a tumultuous people, but the calm remonstrance of the wise and good offering up, with respectful deference, at the foot of the throne, the supplications of humanity. How rare would be the flagrant outrages committed in the very name of the sovereign, if thus annually they were to undergo a severe and strict examination,

amination, while the sword of justice is ready in the 'sovereign's hand to fall on every guilty head !

Of all ranks in society, the military class is that where licentiousness and disorder are likely to prevail with impunity. But let discipline be enforced with due rigour throughout the army ; let partiality never glide into the administration of justice ; and a few examples, such as Justinian has held forth to the world, will controul the wildest and most daring spirits.

To what example do you allude, said the emperor ?—You shall hear, replied Belisarius : it is, in my judgment, the brightest passage of his reign. The generals who commanded at Colchis, had imbrued their hands in royal blood. The king of the Lazians, even then in alliance with the emperor, was inhumanly murdered. Without delay Justinian sent Athanasius, one of the most distinguished senators, with instructions and full powers to hold an enquiry into the conduct of the delinquents, and, after a full hearing, to pronounce judgment, and see the sentence of the law executed on the guilty. Athanasius, who was now judge in the last resort, conducted this important business with all the pomp and solemnity the occasion required. On one of the smaller hills of Caucasus he fixed his tribunal, and there, in the sight of the Lazian army, the murderers of the king were beheaded. But

commissions of this nature call for men superior to corruption, of which, indeed, the number is miserably thinned by the weak and prostrate condition of the senate.

How ! said Tiberius, are you a zealot for that despotic order, those enemies of civil liberty, men of boundless arrogance in power, submissive to usurpation, and ever ready to enslave or be enslaved ?

When I bemoan the want of a senate, replied Belisarius, I do not regret what it was ; I regret what it might have been. There is in every government a tendency to arbitrary power : for it is perhaps natural to man to set up his own will as a law to others. By their rigid behaviour, their inflexible pride, and domineering arrogance, the senate made their administration odious ; and mankind, harrassed out, began to conceive hopes that the government of one might prove more mild and equitable ; they preferred it, therefore, to the tyranny of the few. The sovereign, thus established, grew jealously fond of the sole authority, and upon the ruins of the senate he was determined to build up his prerogative. As he advanced in his encroachment, a panic seized the senate, and the whole order crouched at once with a meanness that exceeded even the wishes of the new master : even Tiberius blushed for their servility *. But it is easy to conceive, that the senate, when

* Tacit. Ann. lib. i.

when it lost the power of doing evil, might still retain that of rendering service to the public; that it might give to government an air of constitutional authority; and being an intermediate order between the sovereign and the people, might connect and strengthen the whole force of the community. And yet it is not in this view that I regard the senate. I consider it as a seminary of statesmen and of heroes, where at all times might be found a set of great and eminent characters, used alike to the sword and to the scales of justice, distinguished both in council and the field, and fully instructed how to give support to government by salutary laws and military force. It is from that nursery of men, all trained to truth, to knowledge, and to virtue, that the sovereign would be always able to select his ministers, his generals, his governors, and his officers of every sort. Let there be occasion now for a man of principle, wisdom, and ability; where is he to be found? How is he to be known? Where has he distinguished himself? Must the fate of a whole people be risked before he can have a decided character? Can a Regulus, a Fabius, or a Scipio, be formed by the new institution of an imperial militia to do duty about the palace*? Instead of a public ca-

H 4

* This new-fangled order consisted of the civil magistrate and the officers of the revenue. The senate was merged in it by the policy of the emperors.

reer of emulation, where the soldiery is enured to the exercise of arms, where talents enter the lists, where virtue is called forth into open day-light, where the characters of men display themselves to the world, and the powers of genius are unfolded, and abilities press forward in the race of glory; instead of this bright school of honour, all generous contention is suppressed, and employments of dignity, that should be the reward of merit only, are now given as a compliment to the accidental circumstances of birth, or partially dealt out by the hand of court favour. From this source spring all the evils, which, like a torrent, threaten to overwhelm the state.

What would you advise, said the emperor? When men have degenerated into vice and profligacy; when the whole race is degraded, and after painful endeavours to appoint for the best, nothing great or good can be separated from the general maïs of the times; judgment then may be weary of deliberating, and he who finds that he chuses only to err, may reasonably desire to wave the fatigue of thinking to no purpose.

That is concluding too hastily, replied Belisarius; though often baffled in the choice, yet the sovereign should not be discouraged. Total depravity never happens; honest men are always to be found; and if not found, they are to be made. They will

be

be made, if the love of virtue, and penetration to distinguish it, form the character of the prince. Farewel, my friends, the topic I have just started shall be discussed at our next meeting ; and it will be no unpleasing enquiry, if we find, as I think we shall, that to reform the worst abuses depends upon the volition of a single man.

Belisarius seems to rest every thing upon the weak irresolute will of the prince, said Justinian to Tiberius : But can a mere act of the will bestow discernment, or ascertain a proper choice ? Is he not aware of the false appearances under which men disguise themselves ?—That men will be born such as you chuse they should, said Tiberius, as if nature were subject to political authority, is a proposition that embarrasses me much. Yet Belisarius has a large and comprehensive mind : his years and his misfortunes have opened to him many veins of reflection ; and it will be well worth while to listen to him.

C H A P. XIII.

ON their arrival the following day, they found Belisarius employed with his man Paulinus, in the cultivation of his garden. Had you arrived, said he, a moment sooner, you would have learnt, as I myself have done, an excellent lesson in the art of governing; for nothing bears so strong a resemblance to political œconomy as the management of plants, and my gardener, who is here at hand, reasons upon the matter like another Solon.

As the emperor and Tiberius were walking a turn with the hero, the young man stated to him the several reflections they had made, together with the reasons upon which they founded an opinion that he was wrong in his last proposition.

It is too true, replied Belisarius, that a prince surrounded in his palace by a circle of courtiers and of flatterers, will have but little knowledge of mankind; but what shall restrain him from breaking through the fence, from being communicative and easy of access? Affability in a sovereign is an enquiry into that truth, which will be disguised by his slaves, but never withheld from him by the friend of the people, the honest husbandman, and the rough veteran soldier.

From

From them he will hear the voice of the public; that voice which is the oracle kings ought to consult, the best, the unerring decider of merit and of virtue! Let that oracle pronounce what men are fit for servants of the state, and an erroneous choice will seldom be made. To say the whole in a few words, the sovereign's attention ought to be directed only to two objects, which are, the counsellors of state, and the men who are to carry the plans of the cabinet into execution: if the former are fit for their high office, I will be responsible for the latter. The whole depends upon having near his person men worthy of their station. Theodoric had but one faithful adviser, the virtuous Cassiodorus, and the glory of his reign is known to the universe. I will take upon me to say, that even at court there are not wanting infallible criterions of honour and fidelity. Severity of manners, disinterested conduct, the honest firmness of truth, a generous ardour in the cause of innocence, unshaken constancy in friendship, a zeal for virtue that never veers about with the gales of fortune, and a reverence for the laws; these are the features of character by which a prince may know how to distinguish among men, and to determine his choice. Would you know the tokens which should make him proscribe men from his presence? They are more legible and certain than the

former ; for virtue may be counterfeit, but the character of vice is seldom acted. As soon as it appears, you may believe it genuine. For example, If I were a king, the man who once should dare to talk with contempt of my people, with levity of the duties of my station, or should attempt to varnish with flattery the abuse of my prerogative, that man should never rank in the list of my friends. Moreover, to an observant eye, that marks the ways of the world, there are never wanting certain traces of character, which, through the veil of dissimulation, betray the habitual sentiment, and develop the inward man. I have heard much of the profound imposture of courtiers : but imposture is as well known as candour itself ; and should the sovereign be imposed upon, the public voice will undeceive him. Let him therefore give his esteem and confidence to the worthy, and he will be sure to be properly informed in every deliberation : for truth and virtue will then sit at his council-board.

But do you consider, said the emperor, what a number of the good and virtuous he will have occasion for, that the free course of justice and the dignity of his reign may be supported in their vigour ? Where is he to find the men to complete so honourable a list ?

Hu-

Human nature, replied Belisarius, will always supply him. Let sovereigns know how to use them, and she will never be defective.—And to direct that use, said Justinian, can there be a better rule than that of wholesome and salutary laws?—That will go a great way, replied Belisarius; but it is not all: the manners are not, in many instances, within the controul of law.

And how then, said Justinian, are inveterate habits, to which time has given a kind of prescription, to be effectually changed?

My gardener will inform you, replied Belisarius. Here, Paulinus; When a noxious herb shoots up among your plants, what do you do?—I take it up by the root, answered the honest gardener.—But why, instead of weeding it, don't you lop it?—Why, it would sprout again, and there would be no end of the trouble: and besides, good sir, it is at the root it sucks in the juices of the earth, and that it is our business to prevent.—You hear him, my friends, said Belisarius; he has given you an abridgment of the law. The law, it is true, retrenches, as far as it is able, the crimes of society; but the vices that give birth to those crimes are suffered to remain, whereas they ought to be weeded and torn up by the root. Nor is that an impracticable

cable scheme: for all vices, at least those of the court, have one common root, and grow out of the same seed.—And what is that pray, said Tiberius?—Inordinate desire, replied Belisarius: and whether that desire be understood to import avarice, that loves to hoard, or rapacity, that delights in squandering; there is nothing sordid and unworthy but what springs from that source. Inhumanity, fraud, treachery, ingratitude, envy, malice, and all the vices that make the gradation to the highest iniquity, are modes of the same depravity of heart, that breaks out in every species of meanness and of pride. It goes on in a course of depredation upon mankind, and with the spoils of the weak pampers itself in riot, voluptuous enjoyment, and every sort of profligacy and corruption. Thus the love of riches infects the whole system of the manners. Does it kindle ambition? Perfidy and fraud are mingled with what otherwise might be a noble passion. Is courage ever grafted upon covetousness? From the stock on which it grows, even courage shall derive the pernicious qualities that debase it into a vice. The most brilliant talents are by avarice tinged with the stain of venality; and the soul, which is enslaved by it, is for ever set up to auction, to be bought by the highest bidder.

From

From this source, this fatal desire of amassing wealth, spring all the crimes that disturb the community. Of this vice, whose tyranny afflicts the universe, Luxury is the parent; for, to make its genealogy clear, Luxury engenders various wants: by these Avarice is begot; and Avarice, to gratify her purposes, is obliged to league with Oppression. From hence it is clear, that to lay the axe to the root of the mischief, we must begin with Luxury: there must commence the grand revolution in the manners.

But that, said the emperor, will be to wage war with an hydra; one head is struck off, and thousands grow in its room. To use a comparison more analogous; Luxury is a Proteus, which is never to be chained, but eludes the touch in different shapes. I will go farther, said the emperor: the causes and the effects of Luxury, its connections and its interests, form a system so compounded of good and evil, that, were it possible to restrain or to destroy it, I should much doubt whether the former would be endured, or the latter prove in the end an advantage to the state.

I grant you, replied Belisarius, that luxury in the state is like a set of wicked and evil men who have entrenched themselves in great connections: measures are kept with them in the beginning on account of their

their party ; but in the end they are ordered into confinement, as enemies of the state. I shall not, however, go so far. Let us set out with facts, which I myself have seen. Luxury, it has been said, is of use in capital cities. I do not believe the position : but, be that as it may, in a camp I am sure it is pernicious. When Pompey observed the soldiers of Cæsar living upon roots that grew wildly in the fields, *They are*, said he, *an herd of brute beasts* ; he should have said, *They are men*. The primary quality of a general is to hazard his life ; the second, to circumscribe his passions and his wants within the bounds of reason and of nature ; and this last, to the man enervated by voluptuous indolence, will be a task of the most difficult self-denial. The people that shall endeavour, amidst the rough scenes of war, to enjoy the softer delicacies of peace, will strive to reconcile two things wholly incompatible, and will neither be able to bear prosperity nor the reverses of fortune. To be victorious will not answer their purpose ; they must riot in abundance ; and should that happen not to be the consequence, even victory will lose its charms. The camp where frugality and sober manners prevail, will be full of spirit and manly vigour ; it will be, as I may say, on the wing ; while the army which is dissolved in luxury grows sluggish, dastardly, and.

and inactive. By temperance all the advantages of inward strength and outward resource are managed and secured; and, on the other hand, they are all thrown away by prodigality, till at length desolation, famine, pale dismay, and shameful flight, conclude the war with infamy and disgrace. To the people softened by effeminacy, every enterprize appears above their strength: the principle of valour may remain, but the power of executing is gone; and the enemy that knows how to harass and fatigue need not endeavour to vanquish: the delays of war will have the efficacy of so many battles.

Nor does the whole mischief of luxury consist in wasting the vigour of the body; it strikes corruption to the very soul. The man of wealth and affluence, who leads pleasure and luxury in his train, diffuses a contagion through the camp; and the soldier of fortune, ashamed to be outdone by his equal in the army, becomes his competitor in profligacy, and for a shew of vain glory, incurs real dishonour. To riches and splendor of appearance esteem is offered up as a tribute, while poverty falls into contempt, and sober virtue is abashed by ridicule: then farewell to all; there can be no deeper perdition. This, my friends, is not a fictitious account of luxury; it is the history of what I have seen.

I know

I know full well, said Tiberius, that you banished it from your armies : pray inform me how was that accomplished ?—Without any kind of difficulty, replied Bleisarius : I cashiered it from my own tent, and made it appear throughout the ranks in a contemptible light. Against the venom of pride contempt is a powerful antidote ! I had learned that a young Asiatic had ushered into my camp the soft indulgences of his native clime ; that he reposed himself under a purple pavilion, and drank out of golden goblets ; that his table smoked with the rarest dishes, and sparkled with the most exquisite wines. I invited him to dine with me, and in the presence of his comrades, Young man, said I, you see we live here upon homely fare ; we are often worse served, and it is what we have to expect ; for in the race of glory it is our lot very often to want bread. Your delicacy, take my word for it, will meet frequent disappointments in this hardy course of life, and therefore I would advise you to take your leave of the army. He received this reproach with due sensibility, made an apology for his conduct, and discharged his retinue.—And was that admonition sufficient ? interposed Tiberius.—Without doubt it was, replied Belisarius ; for my own example gave weight to my precepts ; and, besides, the character of irresolution

solution never belonged to me.—But surely this severity of life must have occasioned great complaints!—When the law is equal and expedient, it is obeyed without murmuring.—Very true; but to be humbled to the level of the poor must have been an hardship upon the rich man.—That may possibly be the case; but to counter-balance that inconvenience, it was agreeable to the poor man to see the rich undistinguished; and the poor in all quarters of the world are the greatest party.—Yes; but in courts the rich have the strongest influence.—They have so, and they revenged themselves by my ruin: and yet, far from repenting, I should act in the very same manner again; for the vigour of the soul, like that of the body, is the result of temperance. Without temperance, there is nothing generous and disinterested; and without disinterestedness, not a single virtue. I enquired of a shepherd one day why his dogs were so faithful: Because, said he, they live on bread. Had they been nourished with flesh, they would be no better than wolves. I was much struck with this reply. In general, the surest way to controul the progress of vice, is to retrench the wants occasioned by evil habits.—All this is practicable in an army, said the emperor, but merely visionary, nay impossible, in a state. Between civil institutions and military law, there

there is a wide difference: by the latter, liberty is much abridged, and fettered with strict limitations. No law whatever restrains a member of society from enriching himself by fair and honest means; and when wealth is acquired, no law can divest him of the right of disposing of it, or prevent a quiet enjoyment of his property. It is the fruit of his industry, his labour, and his talents, or it was transmitted to him by his ancestors. He is at liberty to dissipate, or to gratify his avarice by concealing his treasure.—I subscribe to what you say, said Belisarius.—I go still further, continued the emperor: if the riches of the community are engrossed by a particular class of men, it is fit that they should be diffused, and that labour and industry should derive their share from the hand of idleness.—I concur with you in that also, said the hero.—I will add, resumed Justinian, that sensuality, ostentation, splendor of appearance, the caprices of taste, the coquetry of fashion, the refinements of effeminacy, and the whims of vanity, are all little blemishes in the manners, which the policy of every state connives at, and of which, without a degree of tyranny, no law can take cognizance.—Heaven forbid, said Belisarius, that I should desire to bring down the weight of law upon matters of this sort!—Now then you see, continued the emperor, that luxury stands
pro-

protected by all that is held sacred and inviolable amongst men, by Liberty, by the rights of property, and, I may add, public utility.—I agree to all, said Belisarius, except that last point.—To clear that from objections, said the prince, you will allow that luxury animates the arts, and bids them thrive and flourish; that it encourages industry, and excites a spirit of activity and emulation, offering to the habit of indolence and the love of idleness new incentives of desire, artificial wants, and studied gratifications.

I allow, said Belisarius, that luxury, for those who have been addicted to it, has its allurements; and that it is profitable to the men who study to heighten those allurements, and gratify desire: that the law should leave that commerce free and open, I likewise admit. Is not this what you contend for?

I contend for something further, replied the emperor: I maintain, that the influence of luxury, by progressive degrees, diffuses itself through every class of the community, even down to those who work and labour. It is beneficial to them, for it opens a vent for their commodities, and yields a quick return for their industry.

It is upon this point, said Belisarius, that appearances mislead you: for that which comes to the share of the labouring man from

from the hand of prodigality, only reverts back to the original owner: it was first taken from him by avarice; and if it return to him, it is because luxury cannot prevent it. Recal to mind the idea which I formerly suggested, of the primitive state of society: what is the end it has in view? Is it not to render man useful to man? And in that system, is not the right which one man has to the labours of another, founded on reciprocal conditions? If so, what must be said of him, who employs thousands to answer the multiplicity of his wants, without contributing on his part to the service of others? He is like a sterile and pernicious herb that grows to feed in a field of wheat. Such is the rich man who loiters his days in idleness and luxury. For him the busy part of society are at work; and with a cold disregard he receives the products of their labour, as a tribute due to him. To supply his desire, and administer to his pleasures, seems the employment of all nature; the elements, the most exquisite viands, the arts, and the choicest efforts of invention, are all his. He partakes of all, and is uncondusive himself to any useful end: he engrosses from the public service a number of hands for his own purposes. He does the duty of none, and dies at last without leaving any void,

void, but that of the good things he has consumed.

I am not clear as to this point, said Tiberius ; for it seems to me that he is not altogether so great an incumbrance as you imagine. For if he does not throw the fruits of his own talents into the general fund ; if he does not impart to the public, his own activity and powers ; yet he circulates his money, and that does full as well.

Hold, my young friend, said Belisarius ; money is a mere symbol of valuation, a general standard denoting the worth of the thing we receive, and a pledge for the return of it. It answers the purposes of mutual commerce, and gives facility to the traffic between man and man : but he, who in the course of that traffic gives only the symbol, and never parts with the reality, breaks the true law of commutation, in order to possess himself of that for which he never pays in kind. The pawn which he deposits, dispenses with the contract, instead of binding it closer. Let the magistrate keep painful vigils for the public safety ; let the soldier fight the battles of his country ; and let the husbandman and artificer work incessantly ; the right of the rich man to their joint services, is annually renewed, and his privilege to be insignificant, is stamped upon his gold.

In this manner, said Tiberius, the world

is hired in the service of opulence.—It is so, my young friend, continued Belisarius; and the rich man is at no other trouble than that of paying in the detail to the whole community, the wages of their servitude.—But should there be such a state of servitude? enquired Tiberius. Why should any government endure these men of overgrown opulence?—Because, replied the hero, the law secures to every individual the possession of the property he has acquired; and nothing can be so justly acquired, as the fruit of labour, industry, and knowledge. With the liberty of acquiring the right of possessing, is naturally connected; and property, as well as liberty, is a civil right not to be violated.* It is, without doubt, an evil, that the opulent should have it in their power to throw the whole load of their own existence, and that of their train, upon the community; but it would be a more crying evil, were the principles of emulation suppressed, and industry divested of a secure title to its possessions. Let us therefore not complain

* A philosopher at Athens found a treasure that had been hid in his ground. He wrote to the emperor Trajan, *I have found a treasure*. Trajan answered, that he had nothing to do but to enjoy it. *It is too much for a philosopher to use*, replied the other. Then make a wrong use of it, said the prince. Alexander Severus thought the same.

1

without constraint and violence, will arrange all things in their proper order; and it is thence alone that we are to expect a revolution in the manners.

A revolution of this sort appears difficult to you; but it depends entirely upon the will and the example of the sovereign. Let him be equal and impartial to merit; let the man of modest reserve and simplicity of manners be sure of the best reception at court; let the prince proclaim his contempt of ostentatious expence, and emasculating luxuries; let him behold with an eye of disdain the slaves of luxury; let him view with regards of chearfulness and respect, the men who labour for the public good, and the court will soon take the tone of simple manners, ennobled by wisdom and frugality. Ostentation will no longer be honourable, it will not even be decent. A becoming austerity of life will take the place of licentiousness; every thing frivolous will give way to wisdom; personal merit will be the best letter of recommendation, and pomp and vanity will be left to the empty pleasures of self-applause. Oh! my friends! how rapid would be their fall! You know how docile and imitative the metropolis is; how easy to be moulded to the example of the court! That which grows into esteem is soon in fashion. The good old frugality once restored, disinterested-

ness

ness would follow, and bring in her train heroic manners. The man of ability to be useful, perceiving inordinate desires no longer in vogue, and freed from the debasing wants of luxury, would soon find the sentiments of honour taking root in his heart; the love of his country, and an ardour for glory would warm the breast of freedom, and emulation would kindle up its generous flame. Alas! did the sovereign know his ascendant over the minds of men, with what facility he can mould them to his will, he would enjoy it as his sweetest power, his best and most respectable prerogative; and yet it is the only regal attribute of which he is entirely ignorant.

By what influence, said Justinian, shall the sovereign be able to controul a taste for amusement, the love of pleasure, and the lust of money? Of what consequence is it to him, whose every sense is intoxicated with voluptuousness, whether the court approves or censures his conduct? Will the prince be able to restrain the man, whose power of wealth is great, from making his own use of the industrious? Can he hinder him from being encompassed with delights? from making the arts subservient to his gratifications? No, replied Belisarius: But if it be agreeable to the sovereign, he can brand effeminacy with shame, and indolence with contempt: he can exclude dissipation, vice,

and incapacity, however wealthy, from the first offices of the state. It will depend upon him to make the true comforts of life and every rational enjoyment the sure attendants of a good and respectable character; he can give them to merit, and he can, moreover, take from luxury all its pride and ostentation, till it feels itself the object of contempt. This will almost compleat the work: for when luxury is thus reduced, honesty will no longer be depressed, nor will virtue suffer indignity. There will be other rewards, of which riches can never be the substitute. The esteem of the public, dignities, and honours will be the price of merit. Gold will not be able to cover over shame and infamy, and the little spirit will flutter in vain in pomp and splendid ornament. Believe me, my good friends, take pride from luxury, and you disarm it. All its refined sensations are affected; it subsists entirely upon the opinion mankind entertains of its gaiety and happiness. Subdue that opinion, and you reduce riches to their true standard. If they aspire to honour and real value, they must be ennobled by the use made of them. It is impossible for luxury to be generous; avarice grows upon its wants; and that very avarice is compounded of all the passions that are usually hired for money. But if the most ardent passions, such as pride, ambition, and love itself,

(for

(for love always is in the train of pomp and vain glory) are no longer attached to magnificence and ostentation, you may then compute how the estimate of luxury is diminished, and avarice loses of its force.

The real advantages of wealth, such as convenience, accommodation, the delights of affluence, quiet, independance, and that superiority which fortune claims over those who are retained in its service; all these are more than sufficient to strike a deep impression upon little minds; insomuch that I am far from hoping or fearing the downfall of arts, which have luxury for their support.

But let distinctions and honours be once disjoined from wealth, and then the souls which nature has endowed with energy and spirit, with exalted virtues and generous passions, will look down with disdain upon the petty enjoyments of vanity, and will seek elsewhere the rewards of fame and honour.

The glare of affluence, said Tiberius, will never be ecclipsed in an opulent and flourishing state by the frugal system of barren and unprofitable honours. The eyes of mankind are dazzled by the lustre of wealth; and dignities, nay majesty itself, are obliged to borrow thence their most striking decorations.

I should be glad to know, replied Beli-

farius, of two eminent men, which, according to your ideas, gave the greatest dignity and even majesty to the Roman senate, the rich Lucullus or the indigent Cato? The question quite overpowered Tiberius. I allude now, continued the hero, to an æra of luxury; and yet in that very period, with what veneration did the sound uncorrupted part of the commonwealth (I mean the people) recal to their minds the days of ancient simplicity, when Rome was free, virtuous, and poor; when the lands of her scanty territory were tilled by the conqueror's hand, and the plough was crowned with triumphant laurel? Let us do justice to the people, and rest assured that a wise sovereign, incircled with warriors and with patriots void of arrogance, but full of years and honours, will exhibit to his people a more respectable and honourable scene, than a prince dissolved in luxury and surrounded by a train of glittering vassals. It is a maxim ever inculcated by persons in high offices, that to strike the public with ideas of dignity, their rank ought ever to be adorned with pomp and magnificence. They are generally both superinduced; but they resemble a coat, whose amplitude serves to cover the defects of the body; and this furnishes us with an additional reason why the whole wardrobe of outward shew and splendor, which thus disguises men and confounds the

the

the judgment, should be totally thrown aside. When Virtue displays itself to the public eye, like a wrestler in the amphitheatre, her form and vigour will be better distinguished; and if Vice, Incapacity, and Meanness, ever presume to enter the lists, they will stand more confessed to view, and will the sooner be covered with confusion.

It is another advantage resulting from simple manners in eminent stations, that the burden of rewarding merit is made lighter to the public, and the state makes a saving of expences, that would be rendered ruinous by the insatiable rapacity of ambition. A sensible distribution of honours will dispense with the necessity of magnificent presents; and frugality even in the grant of honours, will make the prince still a better œconomist for the public good. That is the great end he should have in view. To restrain the rich from launching into a profusion of expence is not the point; prodigality is a fire that soon consumes the materials it subsists upon. The prime object is to preserve the men, who, unprovided with every thing but their talents, their knowledge, and their virtues, may be inclined to consecrate themselves to the service of their country, from being tainted by the sweets of luxury, and corrupted by the lust of gold. The brightest distinctions,

such as are never profaned by sordid misapplications, should be reserved for persons of their temper and genius. I can say of myself, that I served my prince with all due zeal, and with considerable success; and my own feelings inform me how vile a thing is gold when compared with the oaken branch and the laurel, those sweet remembrancers of the sovereign's affection and esteem. Moreover that esteem, which is so grateful to the honest heart, especially when seconded by the voice of public approbation, the prince will do well to reserve for actions of real worth and utility, taking care, with a calm dignity of resolution, never to prostitute them for undertakings vain in their nature, frivolous or dangerous. That will be his true frugality. To maintain this properly, it will indeed demand a firm unshaken constancy of mind; a spirit of justice always on its guard against seduction or surprize; a determination of the will that never fluctuates, but checks even a rising hope that it will soften into compliance. This great and dignified character will be acquired, nay it will be supported, if a real love of virtue animate the sovereign's breast. In that case, his opinion will be the opinion of the public, and his example will decide and fix the national character.

Shall I fairly own, said Tiberius, a difficulty that remains with me? At the rate
you

you have gone on, the court, from whence the royal favour, intrigue, and luxury, are discarded, will grow rather serious and gloomy; and possibly then a young prince — Oh! I understand you; that the prince may want amusement is your fear; but, my dear friend, I have not said that the task of governing is a mere pastime. And yet, even amidst the sollicitudes of royalty, there may be many hours of the sweetest enjoyment. The minister, for instance, may report to him the progress of agriculture in places and provinces, which before were melancholy scenes of idleness, poverty, and distress; May he not then say to himself, An act of my will has now made millions happy? His sages of justice may inform him, that by one of his laws the inheritance of an orphan has been wrested from the griping hand of hard-hearted avarice: May he not say with exultation, Heaven be praised! I have been the protector of the poor. From the war-office he will not receive consolations of so pure and unmixed a nature. But when he is told with what zeal and generous ardour his faithful subjects shed their blood in the cause of their sovereign and their country, regret and pity will so compound themselves in mixed sensations of love, tenderness, and gratitude, that the tears of humanity will delight him. In short, the vows and prayers of his own il-

lustrious æra, and the blessings of future ages, which the conscious imagination will anticipate, all crowd together in his breast, and are the solid pleasures of a sovereign. And will not these suffice? Will there be still a void left aching in his bosom? Like the kings of Persia, in ancient times, he may visit the provinces of his empire, distinguishing with his favours those who promote industry and agriculture, plenty and population; while pride, inhumanity, and indolence, for working the contrary mischiefs, will be sure to meet the marks of his displeasure. At Byzantium, as well as at Rome, the public granaries have been visited by the emperors; would it be a degrading condescension, if they made a progress into the country, to know with certainty that under the lowly roof of the peasant bread has not been wanting for his helpless children? Alas! how uninstructed must that prince be in regard to his duty and his interest, who suffers a vacuity in his time! We must not imagine that a prince, in his moments of tranquillity, when he is detached from the cause and duties of his rank, is to remain a stranger to the sweet sensations of domestic happiness and social pleasure. He will have his select friends; and unbending himself with them, he will taste the charm of rational delight. The man of virtue, who wants little, and is therefore

therefore easily contented, displays in his conversation that serenity of sober joy, which springs from peace and inward harmony; that heartfelt ease, to which pride importuned by craving wants, and vice for ever suffering the corrosions of remorse, are utter strangers. An honest mind, it must be acknowledged, will find but little leisure to relax itself from the duties of an important office; but the moments of vacation will be delightful. Remorse, ambition, and fear, are banished from the hallowed hour. The court where uprightness, truth, and virtue may walk secure, without fearing envy, that lies in ambush, and without apprehending sudden disgrace from the whim of the prince, will not, perhaps, be the most brilliant court, but it will be the happiest in the world.—It will not be crowded, said the emperor.—And why not, resumed Belisarius? The little ambitious fry, that love to shine in ease and splendid vanity will not flutter in the circle; but to recompense that loss, men of probity and of useful talents will form a numerous party. I say numerous, my friend Tiberius, and I say it in honour of human nature. When virtue is in fashion, the seeds of it will be disclosed in every heart. Public estimation is a kind of sun in the moral world, that warms, that animates, and calls forth the latent principles of truth and ho-

nour. When the soul is sunk in sloth and languor, it is not then the time to delineate its true character. Is it to be expected that a young man, who has heard nothing from his father but the panegyrick of money; whose imagination has been dazzled with the lustre of gold; who in cities and in villages has seen nothing so abject and despised as labour and industry; who has been taught by experience that pride can creep, that ambition will crouch, that law will bend, the road to honours be thrown open, and court-favour dispense its smiles at the beck and command of riches; that they, and they only, can protect him from injustice, or exercise the severest tyranny; that they adorn and embellish vice, ennoble meanness, and supersede talents, ability, and virtue; is it to be expected, I say, that a young man educated in this train of thinking shall be able to draw the line between good and evil, virtue and self-interest? Let a different doctrine prevail; let the sovereign, that fountain of the manners, set the fashion of the heart; let education and habits of virtue teach the value, the necessity of self-approbation; let them awaken the love of honest fame, and a desire to win the applause of good men; let the soul expatiate abroad to gather the suffrages of the present age, and to forestal the praise of future times; let fair renown be next to virtue the highest

highest and greatest good; let zeal for the moral character make honour dearer than life, and shame more dreadful than even annihilation; let these principles be once established, and it will soon be found how feeble is the influence of sordid views and mean desires. Oh! my good friends! where would now be the names of Decius, Regulus, and the Cato's, had they not been souls of fire, inspired by honour, and replete with virtue? To excite an emulation of their example, there must be an institution founded in wisdom, and real encouragement to make men run the bright career of glory. It were vain and idle to require of the fathers of families, that they shall train up their children in the paths of virtue, if that very virtue be left to languish under disgrace, and bear the spurns of triumphant vice. To re-establish order, and give the manners the strength and beauty of system, all that is good in life must be appropriated to virtue; evil should be the portion of iniquity, and every advantage assigned to justice and to honour. Let government proceed thus systematically, and it will readily strike your observation how the manners will second the laws, and gain strength and enforcement from the popular opinion. Hopes and fears, rewards and punishments, dignities and disgrace, those are the engines that policy should set in motion

motion on the side of virtue and civil liberty; by managing these properly the world may be governed at discretion.

But to keep more closely to the point; by proud and ostentatious manners the great are rendered insolent and avaricious; from simple manners spring the opposite qualities of moderation, justice, and humanity; and thus the leading interests of vice being lifted on the side of virtue, men will adopt the latter with the same spirit that attached them to the former.

You have given us a pleasing reverie, said Justinian, an agreeable and flattering dream!—Far from it, replied Belisarius; to think of making interest and self-love the springs of human actions, is by no means a dream. Call to mind by what methods was formed, in the infancy of the republic, that glorious senatorial order, in which so many ardent virtues, such heroic patriotism blazed forth upon the world. To what, think you, was it owing? It was because there was nothing at Rome superior to greatness of soul;* it was because public veneration was attached to virtuous manners, and glory was the hero's sure reward. Such, in all periods of the world, have been the great springs and movers of the human heart.

I am

* *Dum nullum fastidiretur genus, in quo eniteret virtus, crevit imperium Romanum.* Liv. lib. 4.

I am not now to learn that inveterate habits, and particularly the habits of despotic pride, give way unwillingly to the most powerful motives. But let it be observed, that for one son of profligacy and corruption, who would hold out with obstinacy, in spite of shame, disgrace, and infamy, there are a thousand who would yield at once to the controul of reason, and having glory for their excitement, would walk contentedly in the paths of honour and of virtue. Let me pursue the consequences of this idea. I suppose that men of virtue are placed at the helm of government. I will, in that case, answer with my life for the prompt obedience, the fidelity, and the public spirit of a people, who are no longer bent under the yoke of oppression, but, instead of being harrassed by little tyrants, find their lives, their property, and their liberty, secure under the protection of the laws. The state then begins to raise its head; concord prevails through all classes of the community; the plan of Constantine, built on a sandy bottom, lays a deeper foundation; and from civil union I see spring up emulation, fortitude, zeal for the public good, and with these that weight among the nations which made Rome the mistress of the world.

While Belisarius thus discoursed, Justinian beheld, in silent admiration, the enthusiastic

thusiastic ardor with which the good old man, forgetting the infirmities of age, his miseries, and his misfortunes, triumphed in the idea of rendering his country flourishing and happy. It is generous, said the emperor, to feel so warm a concern for an ungrateful people.—My friends, replied the hero, I should welcome and bless, as the most glorious of my life, the day on which I should be thus accosted; “Belisarius, we are going now to let your blood gush at every vein, but the price of it will be the accomplishment of all your wishes.”

His amiable daughter, Eudoxa, now came to inform him that his supper was ready. He went in, and set himself at table: Eudoxa, with a graceful air of modesty and dignity, served up to her father a plate of pulse, and seated herself by him.—And is that your supper, said the emperor? It is, replied Belisarius; it was the frugal meal of Fabricius, and Fabricius was, at least, my equal.

Let us depart, said Justinian to Tiberius; at a sight like this I find myself covered with shame and confusion.

The court, in hopes of dissipating the cloud which they perceived hung over the emperor's mind, had prepared a scene of festivity. He did not condescend to honour it with his presence. At table the
idea.

idea that occupied his thoughts was the supper of the old general; and as he withdrew, Belisarius is happier than I am, said he to himself; for he lays him down on his pillow without remorse to break his quiet.

CHAP. XIV.

I Live but in his presence, said the emperor next day to Tiberius, as they were on their way to visit the hero; the composure and serenity of his mind transfuse themselves into mine. But as soon as I leave him, the clouds, which in his conversation were dispersed, collect themselves again, and the former gloom returns upon me. Methought yesterday, I perceived in his delineation of manners and principles, the portrait of human happiness; and now it is a canvass presenting an assemblage of bold and random colours, without arrangement or design. While he speaks, every thing appears easy, and now I am involved in a scene of difficulties. In the first place, overloaded as the empire is with immoderate expences, the hero's scheme for making the burthen lighter to the poor!—his plan for new modelling upon a better establishment, an army well nigh annihilated by a war of twenty years!—and then the multiplicity of taxes to be reduced
to

to one general impost, light and simple!—He has seen the subject in all its points of view, said Tiberius, and will, I dare say, remove your difficulties. Acquaint him with the reflections that have occurred to you.

The conversation was accordingly opened with a state of the emperor's reasonings; and after hearing them attentively, I knew, said Belisarius, that I should start in your mind a number of doubts; but I flatter myself I shall be able to remove them all.

The expences of the court, according to my plan, are now reduced. We have banished luxury and favouritism. Let us now take a view of the metropolis; and pray tell me the reason why such a swarm of inhabitants, lazy, indolent, and almost without number, should be a burthen to the state? The corn which is distributed among them, would maintain twenty legions †. It was in order to people the city, and make it emulate Rome, that Constantine charged himself with this ruinous expence. But by what title can an useless and inactive race pretend a right to be thus

† 40,000 bushels per day: the bushel, *modius*, one foot square, and four inches deep. The Roman foot was ten of our inches. The allowance of the soldier was five bushels a month, or the sixth of a bushel per day: therefore 40,000 bushels, at six men to a bushel, would maintain 240,000 men.

thus maintained at the public charge? The Romans, a people altogether of a military genius, might well claim to be nourished, even in time of profound peace, by the fruits of their conquests; yet in the very height of their splendor and their glory, a portion of land to cultivate was all they required; and that being allotted by the state, it is well known with what eagerness they issued forth to the labours of the field. But with us, what useful end is answered by that ever-craving multitude that besieges the gates of the palace? ‡ Was it with such men that I expelled the Huns, those ravagers of Thrace? The city should retain only such a number of inhabitants as can find due employment to maintain themselves by their industry; the rest should be sent forth to colonise in different parts of the empire. They would increase population, and subsist upon the fruits of their labour. Agriculture is the seminary of soldiers: a good and serviceable militia will never be formed out of a lazy race, who are contented to loiter away their days in idle poverty. Let the laws, and above all, the taxes be reduced to a plan of simplicity; and the militia of the palace will be undone by its own insignificance.

What

‡ *Et quem panis alit gradibus dispensus ab aliis.* Prud. Lib. 1. in Synn. *Panes Palatini bilibres.* The Roman pound was ten modern ounces. *Vide Buling. de tributis ac vestigalibus; P. R.*

What an immense saving may be made by that circumstance need not be mentioned. ||

The most alarming expence of government is the maintenance of the army. But even that expence will be reduced to the regular body of the legions; for the veterans established in colonies upon the frontiers of the empire, subsist by their own industry, and their immunities and exemptions from all civil offices stand in the nature of pay. † Those colonies, the master-stroke of Constantine's genius and policy, are not as yet annihilated; to make them revive in all the spirit of their original design, depends upon the will of the prince; for in fact, the number of gallant foldiers, who are now drooping in poverty and indolence, desire no better reward than to be sent to cultivate and defend the lands they have acquired by conquest. The same may be asserted in regard to the troops which have been settled upon the borders of rivers *. Those places now improved and cultivated, repay with abundance the industry of the labourer.

Whole

|| *Vide L'Orig. du Gouv. Fr. par M. L'abbé Garnier.*

† *Jam nunc munificentia mea (CONSTANT.) omnibus veteranis id esse concessum perspicuum sit, ne quis illorum ullo munere civili neque operibus publicis conveniatur.—vacantes terras accipiant, easque perpetuo habeant immunes.* Cod. Theod. Lib. 7. Tit. 20.

* They were called *ripenfes*. Alexander Severus first established them. Vide Lamprid. in Alexand.

Whole swarms of barbarians have been constantly crowding about our frontiers, in hopes of gaining a settlement † in our provinces; and occasionally they have been admitted, without sufficient precaution ‡; but the danger consisted in admitting too large a number. Let foreign settlers, therefore, not be embodied together, but dispersed in distant places, and let the waste and uncultivated lands be allotted to them. Of these we have, alas! too many! * but a vigilant and active government would soon naturalize the foreign intruders, and incorporate them with the rest of the state as useful citizens, and well affected soldiers.

The Legions, therefore, are now the only remaining burthen to the state; and the tribute which we draw from Egypt, from Afric, and Sicily, would well support three times the number the government ever had in its service §. It is not respecting this article that parsimony is required;

† These settlers were called *Lati*, and their lands, *Latic* farms.

‡ As the Goths under the Emperor Valent.

* The lands of the *Fiscus*, or Treasury, were immense. The punishment of most offences was a CONFISCATION of property. Vide *L'Abbé Garn: de l'Origine du Gouv. Fr.*

§ Sicily paid a tribute to the Romans of 7,200,000 bushels of corn; Egypt, 21,600,000; and Afric, 43,200,000; at the rate of six men to a bushel, there was a daily maintenance for 1,200,000 men.

quired, concerning their maintenance †. The state may be at ease, but it cannot be too strenuous in its endeavours to fix them upon a good and regular establishment. There was a time, when admission into the legions was an honour reserved for the citizen of Rome, § and was warmly disputed by the young men, who were eager candidates for it. That time is now no more, but it should be renewed. And then, what may not be atchieved by men who have both honour and bread!

Men are no longer the same, said the emperor. — The nature of man is the same, replied Belisarius; and nothing is changed but opinion, that sovereign mistress of the manners. In fact, we only want the soul of one great man, his genius and his example, to expand themselves abroad, and fix the principles and the manners. From a million of instances, that support this proposition, take a single fact, which is, in my estimation, worthy of the old republic in its greatest period, and evinces plainly, that in all ages, the virtue of mankind has displayed itself in proportion to the demand made

† The monthly pay of a foldier was 400 asses, value 25 silver denarii, equal to one *nummus aureus*. The *assus* was an ounce of copper, the silver denarius weighed one, and the aureus 140 grains.

§ This honour was also eagerly disputed by the youth of the provinces, who had the rights of the city.

made for it by those who were sufficiently skilled in the powers of human nature.

Rome was taken by Totila. One of our brave officers, whose name was Paul, had sallied out of the city at the head of a small party, and entrenched himself on an eminence, where he was surrounded by the enemy. Famine, it was not doubted, would soon reduce him to the necessity of surrendering; and in fact, he was in want of every thing. In this exigence, he addressed himself to his soldiers: " My friends, said he, we must either perish, or survive in slavery. You, I know, will not hesitate about the choice; but it is not enough to perish, we must perish nobly. The coward may resign himself to be consumed by famine; he may linger in misery, and wait, in a dispirited condition, for the friendly hand of death. But we who have been schooled, and educated in the field of battle, we are not now to learn the proper use of our arms: we know how to carve for ourselves an honourable death. Yes, let us die, but not inglorious and unrevenged; let us die covered with the blood of our enemies, that our fall, instead of raising the smile of deliberate malice, may give them cause to mourn over the victory that undoes us. Can we wish to loiter a few years more in life, when we know
" that

“that a very few must bring us to our
 “graves? The limits of human life cannot
 “be enlarged by nature, but glory can ex-
 “tend them, and give a second life.”

He finished his harangue: the soldiery declared their resolution to follow him. They began their march; the intrepid countenance with which they advanced, soon denoted to the enemy a design to give battle with all the courage of the last despair. Without waiting, therefore, to receive the attack of this illustrious band, the Goths thought proper to compound, by an immediate grant of life and liberty. †

I can count, my friends, upon at least two millions in the empire, capable of the same magnanimity, if another Paul were at the head of them. We can reckon also some chiefs of this illustrious class; our victories have pointed them out. While such resources remain, let us not despair of the commonwealth. Are you still to be told, to what a degree of prosperity, affluence, and population, the force of the state may be increased? Recal to mind the condition in ancient times, I will not say of Gaul, which we meanly abandoned, ‡ but of Spain,

† *Leonard. Aretin. de Bell. Ital. adversus Gothos.* Lib. 4.

‡ In order to deliver Rome and Italy from the Goths, the emperor ceded to them the fairest provinces of Gaul. *Facta est servitus nostra pretium securitatis alienæ.* Sidon. Apolli. Lib. 7. Ep. 7.

Spain, Greece, Italy, the republic of Carthage, and the various realms of Asia from the banks of the Nile to the Euxine shore. Recollect that Romulus †, who in the infancy of the state had but one legion, was able at his death to bequeath to his successor forty-seven thousand men under arms. By that circumstance you will be instructed what may be done by the activity, vigilance, and spirit of a single man. The empire, it is said, is undone. How! are Italy, Sicily, Spain, Lybia, and Ægypt, all exhausted? Are Boeotia, Macedonia, and the plains of Asia, which made the riches of Darius and Alexander, are they grown barren and unproductive? But the numbers of mankind are thinned! Oh, my friends, let social happiness be re-established in those regions, and the progress of population will be rapid: men will be found in plenty, and then, I should have courage to propose the vast plan which I have meditated, and which, perhaps, is the only way to render the empire more powerful and more flourishing than ever.—And what can that plan be, said the emperor?—I will open it to you, replied Belisarius.

The operations of war, according to our way of conducting it, exceeded the strength

† The legion at that time consisted of 3000 foot and 300 horse. *Vide Dionys. Halic. and Plutarch's life of Romulus.*

of our armies; we were quite exhausted by laborious marches and fatigue of every kind. The diversion of our arms gave the enemy an opportunity to alarm us with sudden incursions, which the line of veterans and of Agrarian soldiers, posted on our borders, was not sufficient to withstand; and in consequence, before the regular legions could come up to their support, devastation and terror without controul spread a general ravage *. In order, therefore, to oppose to this torrent a constant fence, I would new model the empire upon a plan of military policy, in such sort that every freeman should be a soldier, but for the purposes only of internal defence. Upon this system, every prefect would have under his command a well-arranged army, of which the cohorts would be formed by the cities, and the legions by the provinces, with proper places appointed for their rendezvous, that they might so act in concert as at the sound of a trumpet, to assemble immediately, and be embodied at the shortest warning.

From

† In the time of Augustus, the frontier provinces did not exceed nine. The legions were established at fixed and regular posts. But the number of provinces encreasing afterwards, the legions became inadequate to the service. Constantine withdrew them to an interior station, and the lines of veterans, to whom lands were allotted on the borders of the enemy, made but a feeble substitute in the room of more regular forces.

From an army of this kind would result the further advantage, that every individual would glow with the love of his native soil; that soil which he has helped to people, which his hands have cultivated, and which is endeared to him by the labour he has employed to make it flourishing and fruitful. With these incentives in their bosoms, you may imagine to yourself how ardent they would be in the just defence of their property †.

In an empire of wide extent, there is nothing so difficult as to diffuse through the whole an idea of a common cause, a principle of civil union, and one general interest. Among people separated by the sea, we seldom observe any considerable degree of attachment to one another. The South is wholly indifferent about the dangers that alarm the North. The Dalmatian and the Illyrian march under our banners into Asia with the coldest insensibility: to them it is a matter of no concern whether the Tigris flows under our laws or those of the Persian. By military discipline he is retained in the camp, and from the love of plunder he derives a degree of spirit; but cool reflection succeeds; by fatigue and labour he is relaxed;

K 2

laxed;

† Land-possessions inspire their cultivators with courage to defend them. The fruit of the soil is the stake which the conqueror proposes to win. *Zenoph. on Husbandry.*

laxed ; and in the first moment of discontent or terror he abandons a cause which is not his own. Upon my plan the very reverse would be the case : the name of country would not be an empty sound to the soldier, but the object of his affection, ever dear and present, and twined about his heart by all the tenderest ties of nature. To inflame the soldier with spirit against the enemy, the proper harangue may be thus conceived.

“ Friends, countrymen, and fellow-citizens !
 “ behold the lands which gave you nurture ;
 “ Lo, the roof under which you drew your
 “ first breath ! the tomb of your ancestors,
 “ the cradle of your infants, and the bed
 “ of your wives, whom you are now going
 “ to defend.”—And are not these powerful and pathetic motives ? They have made more heroes than even love and ambition. Of their resistless influence over minds trained up to ideas of war and the rigorous duties of military discipline, you may easily form a judgment.

For my part, I dwell with inexpressible delight on the picture, which even now imagination fondly draws of a laborious, warlike youth, pressing with ardour in all our towns and villages to the standard of their country ; a spirited and active race, preserved by labour from the vices of indolence, enured by habit to the rigours of manly exercise, addicted to the useful arts
 of

of peace, and eager to take the field upon the first alarm of danger ! In a militia so constituted, the crime of desertion would be a crime against nature * ; and their courage and fidelity would be secured to their country by every sacred bond that holds society together. The state would not the less on this account be provided with its regular legions, which would be a moving bulwark, ready to be advanced whenever danger called. By these means a spirit of emulation and a warlike genius would be diffused throughout the empire, and the reward of bravery might be a commission to serve in the regular and more honourable body of the legions, which would be thus recruited, without those rash levies of men, which partiality, fraud, collusion or negligence, insist into the army †. We should then have a muster of the people. How superior would be the force of the empire to any former period of its strength, even though we should look back to the days of its most refulgent glory ‡ ! Would the enemy of the South

K 3 or

* *Communis utilitatis derelictio contra naturam est.*
Cic. Off. 3.

† *Hinc tot ubique ab hostibus illatæ clades, dum longa pax militem incuriosius legit; dum possessionibus indicti Tyrones per gratiam aut dissimulationem probantur.* Veget. lib. i. cap. 7.

‡ Under Augustus 23 legions; under Tiberius 25; Adrian 30; Galba 372,000 men, half Romans and the other half auxiliaries.

or the North dare, in that case, to invade us? Would they assault a people, who with an undisciplined army, unprovided with the proper instruments of war, and almost without bread, have so often beat back their irruptions?

And who can answer, interrupted Justinian, that, in a military state like this, the people will always be under the controul of government? Who will venture to ensure a due subordination?—It will be ensured, replied Belisarius, by their own interest, by the benignity of the laws; and the moderation, justice, and sagacity, of a wise administration. You will be so good as to bear in your minds, that I made the happiness of the people the very corner-stone of the edifice.—It is very true, said Justinian; but the people are prone to change, fond of innovation, inconstant, restless, and ready to be inflamed by the first factious leader that hopes to find his account in civil commotions.—You see the people in one light only, replied Belisarius; you judge of them in their present condition, a state of suffering, like that in which they were plunged at Rome, * when Rome had fallen into misfortunes. But of this you may be sure, that men always know their own wants, and will

* *Hi moras vulgi odisse præsentia, præterita celebrare.*
—*Ingenio mobili (plebem) seditiosam, discordiosam, cupidam rerum novarum, quieti et otio adversam.* Sallust.

will understand their rights : let the prince succour the former, and protect the latter, and you may rely upon it that they will acknowledge all his patriot cares with gratitude. The sovereign's love will be repaid by the affections of his people. If he prove just, benevolent and wise, confiding the offices of his administration to none but men worthy of seconding the good intentions of a patriot prince, the people on their part will be docile and submissive. By what metamorphosis, I should be glad to know, can a few discontented spirits, a paltry handful of seditious malecontents convert a people, who have reason to be satisfied, into a set of perjured rebels ? Such a revolt is only to be dreaded by him who leaves his subjects to groan under oppression : the character of reigning for the good of the community will always be a bulwark against treasons and conspiracies. Can it be imagined, that amidst the applauses sent up to the throne by a grateful people, rebellion will dare to erect its standard ? Where is it to seek accomplices ? Will it go into scenes of rural tranquillity, where peace, and liberty and plenty, sit smiling on the land ? Will it skulk in towns, where industry works in chearfulness, and the fortunes of every citizen, his life, his property, and his rights, are under the safe-guard of the laws ? Will it cabal in families, where innocence, truth, honour, and

the sanctity of marriage-vows co-operate with all the tenderest ties of nature, and endear the domestic scene? Can treason in such places expect to find associates? It will not expect it; for the empire of justice is immoveable, or nothing sublunary can have a lasting duration. I will allow you that in making the subject powerful, in order to render him happy and contented, there is a risk that requires a daring mind; but of that daring mind I should be, though my ruin were the consequence: I should speak out and tell my people, I put arms into your hands, to serve and aid me, if my government be just, and to resist usurpation, if I should be guilty of it. This you will deem rashness, but in my idea it is the height of prudence thus to put under due restraint both my own passions and those of the people, thereby establishing a sure barrier against the ill consequences of either. With my crown I should, by these means, transmit to my successor an hereditary necessity to govern according to law; and that necessity, thus rendered descendible, would be the brightest monument of glory that ever monarch left behind him. I am aware, my friends, that genuine virtue does not act upon the principle of fear; but if virtue is entrenched by it, I shall think it a considerable advantage; for what virtue is at all times sure of walking upright? I know it
is

is a maxim that a prince is above the laws*; the very law itself asserts it, and perhaps wisely; but my first care should be at my accession to forget that maxim, nor would I forgive the sycophant who should remind me of it. My friends, I now must take my leave. To change the face of things, and new model an empire, is a laborious task: let us repose ourselves a little. To-morrow I shall be glad of your company. There still remains behind another grievance, which afflicts my spirits: but I will reserve it for another opportunity. At our next meeting I shall endeavour to interest Tiberius in regard to the matter I have now only alluded to.

His views are, no doubt, great and extensive, said the emperor as he was on his way back. But if his schemes are practicable, they must be undertaken by some prince in the vigour of youth, who ascends the throne with a manly firmness of mind, a spirit of justice, of courage and of virtue. Added to these qualities, he will have occasion for a long reign in order to bring about so wonderful a revolution.—I am not able to decide, said Tiberius; but in his plan I thought I perceived some things that require only an effort of the will to compass them; and if the rest must depend upon time, that time, it is to be hoped, is not so

K 5 remote,

* *Princeps legibus solutus est.* Pandec. lib. i.

remote, but we may expect to see it dawn upon us shortly.—My dear Tiberius, replied the emperor, you behold difficulties with the eye of youthful inexperience ; your activity vaults over them ; but my infirmities shrink back dismayed. To execute great projects, alas ! said he, with a deep sigh, we must begin early. It is not the time to begin to live, when all we need is to learn to die ; and yet I must see the good old man again. His conversation it is true, afflicts me ; but I had rather indulge a pleasing sadness in his company, than suffer the insulting gaiety of vain unthinking men, who throng about me in my palace.

C H A P. XV.

AT the accustomed hour, the next day, the emperor and Tiberius found the hero in his garden, enjoying the departing rays of the western sun. It no longer lights me, said Belisarius, with a look expressive of inward happiness, but it still warms and comforts me. In that stupendous orb I adore the bounty and magnificence of the great Creator.—To hear this strain of piety from a warrior, said Justinian, delights and ravishes me ; it is the triumph of religion ! —The triumph of religion, replied Belisarius,

rius, is to administer consolation in the hour of adversity, and to mingle in the cup of sorrow the sweets of calm delight, and heavenly satisfaction. That religion affords this heartfelt joy, who can give better testimony than myself? Overwhelmed with years, deprived of sight, and destitute of friends, abandoned over to myself, and nothing present to my thoughts but the decline of frail mortality, affliction, and my approaching grave, I have nothing left but to send up my meditations to Heaven: to deprive me of that were, perhaps, to drive me to despair. The good man walks with God *; a secret consciousness that he is acceptable to his Creator warms his heart; and from that source he derives strength and rapture even in the midst of affliction. When I was first surrounded with misfortunes, deserted by all, and given up to my enemies, who were plotting my ruin, I have often said to myself, Be of courage, Belisarius; you are free from self-reproach, and your God beholds you. My heart, where all was laid waste and desolate with misery, revived and glowed within me at that reflection; I felt it expand in my bosom with new life and joy. I hold the same self-conference still; and when my daugh-

K 6. ter

* *Nulla sine Deo mens bona est. Senec. Inter bonos viros ac Deum amicitia est, conciliante virtute. Idem.*

ter is with me, yielding to the stroke of affliction, and bathing my face with tears ; Can you be afraid I ask her, that He who sent us on this stage of life, will cease to prompt, to invigorate, and support us ? Your heart is endowed with sensibility, and truth and purest virtue reside there ; your father has not more to answer for than yourself ; and can you imagine that the Fountain of all goodness will desert that virtue which he loves ? Oh ! my daughter, come but the moment, when He, that with his breath called forth my soul into existence, shall command it into his own glorious presence ; and then we shall see whether wicked men will follow thither to disturb that state of bliss. My poor daughter Eudoxa listens with fixed attention to this consoling language, and her tears fall as she hears it ; but they are tears that flow mingled with delight : and thus by degrees I lead her to consider life as a little voyage, which we perform in a bark not accommodated to our wishes, and therefore with joy we approach the port, where all is peace, delight, and rapture.

You have framed for yourself, said the emperor, a very comfortable scheme of religion !—It is the true religion, replied Belisarius. Would you have me contemplate the God whom I adore, in the light of a sullen and offended tyrant, who delights in vengeance only ? I know full well that

that when he is represented to us by men of dark, of jealous, haughty and melancholy tempers, the image of the Deity takes a tincture from the imaginations it has passed through, and a benevolent God is made to appear a fretful, passionate, and irascible being, like the creatures that talk of him. They perhaps find their account in making their own vices the attribute of heaven: But I endeavour to figure to myself the perfections which it is my duty to imitate. Do you think this an error? It is at least an innocent one. From the hands of my Creator I came forth weak and feeble; he will be indulgent therefore; to him it is apparent that I have neither the madness nor the wickedness to offend him: that infatuation of mind, that impotence of pride is foreign to my heart. To my God I am more dutifully attached, more fervently devoted, than ever I was to the emperor: and of this I am sure, that the emperor, who is but weak erring man, would never have done me harm, if, like my God, he could have read my heart.

Alas! that God, said Justinian, is, notwithstanding what you have said, a God of wrath; a terrible God!—Yes, to the guilty he is terrible, replied Belisarius; but I am self-acquitted in my own conscience; it tells me I am good and virtuous; and in the same manner that the flagitious soul is incompatible

compatible with the essence of the divinity, I have the comfort to think that the soul of the just man is analogous to the fountain of all goodness.—But which of us is the just man, said the emperor?—He that endeavours most to be so, replied Belisarius: for goodness consists altogether in volition.

That you delight in the contemplation of your God, said Tiberius, is not surprizing, since you behold him in so amiable a light! —Alas! replied the old man, I know how much I am obliged to strain my feeble powers in order to conceive suitably of the Divine Majesty; and after all the efforts of a limited capacity to form into one complex idea all that is sublime, and beautiful, and good, I am conscious how inadequate the image is at last. But what can a man, who would elevate his thoughts to a notion of his Maker? If that all-wise and incomprehensible Being delights in any thing, it is in the effusion of benevolence to all his creatures: this reflection paints him to me in the mildest attitudes, and on that idea I therefore dwell, in order to form the most endearing conception of him.

But it will not be enough, said the emperor, to define him a benevolent Being: you must call him just also.—They are synonymous words, replied Belisarius. To delight in goodness, and to have a detestation for evil; to reward the former, and

and to punish the latter, that is the true character of goodness: that is my first, my unalterable principle. Has it never happened to you as it has to me, to attend the levee of Titus, of Trajan, and Antoninus? That is one of the reveries in which my imagination loves to indulge. I fancy myself in that court, composed of the true friends of the crown: I see those illustrious princes dispense the smiles of complacence all around the honest circle; I see them communicate the beams of glory and of majesty, mixed and blended with such pleasing delicacy and softness, that every heart participates of the joy the sovereign feels in diffusing happiness to others. If that be an august scene, how much more glorious and refulgent will be the court of Him, who is at last to receive my soul! It will be filled with the Titus's, the Trajans, and the Antoninus's, those delights of mankind. It is in their company, and that of the virtuous of all ages and of all countries, that the poor blind Belisarius will glow with purest fire before the throne of a good and equitable God.—And the wicked, said Tiberius, how do you dispose of them?—They will not be there! I shall hope, continued he, to see in that blaze of glory the august and wretched old man who took away my eyes; for he has done much good, from the inclination of his heart;

heart; and if he ever did wrong, he was surprised into it. He will rejoice, I believe, to see my lost organs restored to me!—As thus the hero spoke, his whole countenance was irradiated with joy, while the emperor poured floods of tears, reclining upon the breast of Tiberius.

At length his tender sensations giving way to reflection, Do you hope, said the emperor, to find the pagan heroes in that paradise which has so enraptured you? Do you think they will be admitted?—My good neighbour, replied Belisarius, you do not mean, I am sure, to afflict me in my old age! I am poor and wretched, without any other comfort than that which springs up within me from the scenes of futurity which I have fancied to myself. If it be an error, pray indulge me in it: it cheers my heart, and God is not offended; it enlarges my idea of his benevolence, and I love him more ardently for it. I cannot be induced to think that between my soul and that of Aristides, of Marcus Aurelius and of Cato, there is an eternal abyss of separation; if I thought there were, I feel that my love for the great Author of our existence would be diminished by it.

Young

* It has been decided by the fathers that God will work a miracle, rather than let him perish everlastingly who has faithfully followed the laws of nature. But Justinian, it is well known, was a bigot, and of a persecuting spirit.

Young man, said the emperor to Tiberius, while you honour the enthusiastic virtue of this hero, you must not believe him an orthodox guide. Belisarius never pretended to be deeply versed in the mysteries of faith. — And who can be deeply versed, replied the hero? Alas! who can presume to think his eye has pervaded the great scheme of Providence. The all-wise Creator has given us two guides, which ought to operate in concert with each other; and those guides are, the light of faith, and of natural reason. The truth of which we are convinced by intuition, faith will never contradict. Revelation is but a supplement to the light of nature: it is the same voice that speaks to us from the throne of heaven, and from the bottom of the heart. It is impossible that they should be at variance; and if on the one hand, the truth that stirs within me, announces the just and good man to be acceptable to his Creator, I shall never hear on the other, that he is obnoxious to the wrath of heaven. — And who can be answerable, said the emperor, that this inward sentiment is the revelation of nature? — If it be not, replied Belisarius, a just and benevolent God suffers me to be misled, and all is lost. It is the light of natural reason that tells me there is an all-governing mind, that commands me to worship him, and promulgates his laws
in

in my very soul. And will the wise Creator give me by those means an inward conviction, that may prove at last the grossest error? Alas! whoever is my antagonist on these points, I beg him to leave me still my conscience, the light of intuition: it is my guide, and my best support. Without it, I can no longer distinguish right from wrong, or good from evil: truth and falsehood become indiscriminate, and my duty loses its sanction. I do not even know that there are any duties to bind me: I then am blind indeed; and they who took from me the light of the sun, were by far less barbarous than the man who should extinguish in me the internal light of reason.

Let me ask you, said Justinian, what do you perceive so clearly by this faint, glimmering ray within the mind?—I perceive, replied the hero, that the religion which intimates to me a just and benevolent God, is a true religion; and that whatever is repugnant to that fine inward sentiment, is not of that religion. Shall I avow my principles? I am attached to that religion, because it renders me better, and gives a dignity to my nature. If I felt that it made me haughty, fierce, and hard of heart, I should abjure it at once, and I should say to my God, In the dilemma which obliges me to be either wicked or an unbeliever, I chuse

chuse the latter, and am sure it will least offend you.—But happily the religion I embrace, is congenial to my heart. Love God, and love his works: can any thing be more simple, just, and natural? To wish good to him who does us evil; what a noble morality! how generous and sublime! In our misfortunes, to consider all as a trial of virtue, how sweet and comfortable the philosophy! Thus far I am content; and while I possess this moral system, if mysteries are proposed to me, I acknowledge them above my reason, and I submit, with a sincere compassion for those whose judgment wants the same rectitude and docility: at the same time I recommend them to the supreme goodness of the Father of all, and to the infinite mercy of that omniscient Judge who sees the paths of error, and can forgive it.

In this way of proceeding, said Justinian, you are going to deal out salvation to numbers without distinction!—And is it necessary, replied Belisarius, that numbers should be in a state of reprobation?—I feel with you, said Justinian, that it is more comfortable to love God, than to fear him; but all nature attests his vengeance, and the rigour of his decrees.—For my part, said Belisarius, I am persuaded that he only punishes when the divine grace cannot be extended; that he is not the origin of evil;

evil; that he has formed the best possible system, and has diffused all the good that system was capable of receiving. † That is my theology. Let it be proposed throughout the world, and it will be found worthy of being embraced with zeal and veneration: the voice of nature will speak aloud in favour of it. Should violence and cruelty arm it with sword and fire; should the rulers of the earth, who profess this religion, with bigot rage bid the fiends of hell over run the world, and in the name of God excruciate those whom they ought to pity and to love, they will establish one or other of these two propositions; either that their religion is barbarous like themselves, or they give the lie to the doctrine of truth.

You have raised, said Justinian, a serious and important question! To throw some light upon it, it will be proper to enquire whether a prince has a right to establish throughout his dominions, an uniformity of

† The opinion of the Stoic school, which was adopted by Leibnitz and other Optimists, is here ascribed to Belisarius. *Bonus est (Deus,) bono nulla cujusquam boni invidia est: fecit itaque quam optimum potuit.* Senec. Epist. Lib. 25. *Quidquid nobis negatum est, dari non potuit.* Idem de Benef. Lib. 2. Cap. 28. *Magna accepimus majora non cepimus.* Ibid. Cap. 29. *Deum sine consilio agentem ne cogitare quidem facile est: quæ autem fuisset causa propter quam male mihi consultum fuisset.* Marc. Anton. Lib. 6.

of faith, and one general mode of worship. If this right be inherent in the crown, how can it be exerted against rebellious and stubborn dissenters, but by force and punishments?

As I am making a profession of faith, said Belisarius, I will frankly own, that whatever concerns the good order of society, and has an influence on the manners, is of necessity subject to the jurisdiction of the sovereign, not as the infallible judge of truth and falsehood, but as a magistrate whose province it is to compute the political good or evil that results from the actions of men: and this opinion of mine I found upon this principle, which should be a first principle in every man's creed, namely, That God is the friend of order, and authorizes nothing that can disturb it.—

Well then, said the emperor, do you doubt that there is a close and intimate relation between the established faith and the manners?—I acknowledge, replied Belisarius, that there are many truths, by their nature interwoven with the manners; but take this with you, that there are intuitive truths planted by the hand of God in every breast, which no man in his senses will call in question. Whereas the truth of mysteries, which are beyond the reach of the human understanding, and therefore require a revelation, has no connection with the mo-
rals

rals of mankind. For if we consider a moment, we shall perceive, that the all-wise Being has detached his mysteries from the great system of ethics, for purposes the most important to society, namely, that without waiting for a revelation, man should be led by the propensity of his nature, to a moral conduct. And if Providence has thought fit to make the welfare of society, the political happiness of mankind, the fate of empires, and the course of human contingences, altogether independent of the sublime truths of revelation, my question is, Why should not the civil magistrate imitate the dispensations of the Supreme Being? The sovereign should enquire dispassionately whether, by believing or not believing any particular speculative point, mankind would in a moral sense be better or worse, and in a political view, more valuable citizens, or more faithful subjects. This, I will take upon me to say, should be the rule of sovereign authority; and in consequence of it you see what a number of ingenious disputes would be excluded from civil government.

I observe, said the emperor, that you leave nothing to the superintendence of the magistrate but what essentially concerns the interests of society: and yet among all the important duties of sovereignty, the most sacred office surely consists in being the vicegerent of heaven, for the purposes of

of

of enforcing the dispensations of the eternal will.—Ah! let them be vicegerents of almighty goodness, said Belisarius, and they will do well to leave the ministry of vengeance to the demons of hell.—That the darkness of ignorance should be dispelled, and that Truth should have its triumph throughout the world, must be allowed, said the emperor, to be coincident with the plan of Infinite Goodness.—Truth cannot fail to triumph, said Belisarius, but it must not be by the arm of flesh. Do you not perceive that, by putting the sword of vengeance into the hand of Truth, you entrust Error with it also? The very possession of that sword will be ever deemed a sufficient authority to wield it without mercy; and, let me add, Persecution will always be on the side of the strongest, and will there erect its banners according to the prevalence of opinion, and, as that suggests, will glut itself with the blood of unhappy victims. In this manner, we know, Anasthasius persecuted that mode of faith which Justinian now protects. The descendants of men, who were formerly murdered by the spirit of intolerance, have now reversed the scene, and in their turn commit a daily massacre upon the posterity of those, who not long since butchered mankind for the service of another religion. Behold those two princes, who thought to render themselves acceptable

ble to God by piously murdering their fellow-creatures! Supposing the principle to be right, can either of them be sure that the blood he spilt was that with which God desired to see his altars imbrued? Error has an immensity of space, and truth is like a mathematical point in the prodigious void. And who has hit that point? Each man assumes that happiness to himself; but upon what proof? If there be the clearest evidence that he is right, can that evidence authorise him to insist, and to insist sword in hand, that mankind should be convinced by it? Persuasion comes from heaven, or it is the work of man. If from heaven, it will bring with it the credentials of its mission; if it be of human origin, it can only claim the authority of reason over the faculties of the understanding. Each man is answerable for his own soul. It is his business, therefore, and his only, to determine the choice upon which the happiness or misery of his future existence depends. You would compel me to think as you do; and if you are mistaken, you see how dear it costs me. As to yourself, the error might have been innocent; will it be innocent to work my ruin? Alas! why is man so arrogant as to set up his own religious creed as a law to others? Millions, who had entertained a rational system of belief, have been seduced and imposed upon

upon. But let it be even supposed that the zealous religionist is infallible: is it my duty to attach infallibility to any human opinion? God, he will say, enlightens him: let him then charitably pray, that God will favour me in the same manner. But, after all, if this infallibility be assumed upon human evidence, what security has the zealot for himself or for me, whom he has forced into his sect? The only point upon which all theologists agree is, that they do not comprehend the very mysteries they dare to pronounce upon with such peremptory decision: and shall it be a crime in me to doubt, where they do not understand? Let pure and simple faith descend from heaven, and it will be sure of gaining proselytes: but decrees and penal edicts will give two things only to the world, rebels and hypocrites. The brave will rebel, to vindicate the rights of the free-born mind, and they will be martyred; cowards will wear the mask of dissimulation; while the fanatics of every sect will be so many tigers let loose upon mankind. Cast an eye upon Theodoric, that wise king of the Goths, whose reign (if we except the latter end of it) was not inferior to the administration of our most virtuous princes. He was of the Arian persuasion; but so far from desiring to plant his own faith by the destruction of mankind, that he punished the occasional conformity of his favourites

L

with

with death. "How can I think, he used
 "to say, that you will not betray me, since
 "with a spirit of the basest complaisance
 "you betray him who was adored by your
 "forefathers?"—The emperor Constantius
 thought the same. With him it was never
 a crime in the subject to be steady in his re-
 ligious tenets; on the contrary, it was in his
 eyes a sin of the deepest dye in any cour-
 tier to abjure his faith for temporal mo-
 tives, and betray his soul for the sake of
 court favour. Would to Heaven, that like
 them, Justinian had never bent himself to
 enslave the privilege of thinking! But alas!
 he suffered himself to be involved in con-
 troversies, which can never be ended; and
 which gave him more trouble than all his
 illustrious labours. For what were the con-
 sequences? Seditions, revolt, and massacres.
 His own quiet and that of the state was un-
 done.

The tranquillity of the state, said the em-
 peror, depends upon unity of sentiment.
 —The expression is equivocal, replied Be-
 lisarius, and the constant source of mistake.
 The minds of men are never in better har-
 mony, than when each individual is at liber-
 ty to think for himself. Do you know whence
 it is that opinion is jealous, arbitrary, and
 intolerant? It is owing to the fatal error of
 sovereigns, in thinking the speculative o-
 pinions of mankind of high importance to
 the

the state, and distinguishing one dogmatical party with the most partial favours, in prejudice and total exclusion of all the rest. No man is willing to be marked out for contempt, proscribed, and stripped of all his civil rights. Whenever a state is divided into two factions, and one of them engrosses all the advantages of the community, the other, whatever be the cause of dissension, will think itself aggrieved, and the love of their country will give way to resentment and sourness of spirit. The most frivolous object will become grave and important, as soon as it influences the peace of society. It is that influence, and not the thing itself, which inflames the temper of party. Let a controversy be raised concerning the grains of sand on the sea-shore; to that controversy annex a degree of influence upon the condition of the subject, and it will be managed with as much heat and animosity as any other question. Religious fury is, for the most part, compounded of envy, fierce desire, ambition, pride, hatred, and fanatic vengeance, that tyrannizes with zeal, as if it were commissioned by heaven: and all these complicated passions are the gods of which sovereigns are made implacable delegates. Were there nothing to be gained on earth by waging war for heaven; were zeal for truth to be deprived of a pious licence to murder all

who differ about an hypothesis; were religious enmity no longer allowed to rise upon the ruins of the man it hates; were it restrained from enriching itself with the spoils of the opposite sect, and gaining undue honours and preferments; the spirits of mankind would soon be composed, and all the various parties would be left to dogmatise after their own fashion.

And so the cause of God would be abandoned, said Justinian.—The cause of God, replied Belisarius, wants no enthusiasts to support it. Is it owing to polemic divinity that the sun rises, and the stars glitter in the firmament? Truth shines with its own pure genuine lustre, and the understandings of men are not enlightened by burning the faggots of persecution. The actions of mankind are committed by Heaven to the jurisdiction of sovereigns; but to judge of the inward sentiment, is a right reserved for the great Searcher of hearts. That Truth has not chosen princes for its arbitrators will be perfectly plain, if we consider, that not one of them is exempt from error.

If the liberty of thinking, said the emperor, must not be limited, the liberty of acting will soon claim the same immunity.

There can be no danger of it, replied Belisarius: it is in that respect that man is under the immediate controul of the civil

power ; and while that power confines itself within the limits of law and natural justice, it will have the less occasion for force to maintain its own dignity, and the good order of society. The basis of authority is justice ; remove the latter, and the former falls to the ground. I want to know by what arts of illusion is mortal man to deify himself, and induce his fellow-creatures to be duped by the monstrous apotheosis to such a depth of infatuation, as to let him, sword in hand, command mankind to believe what he believes, and think what he thinks ? Ask the commanders of the army, whether the logic of the sword has ever convinced the world ? Bid them tell you what were the effects of violence and rigour against the Vandals ? I was in Sicily ; Salomon arrived in the extremity of despair : “ All
 “ is over in Africa, said he ; the Vandals
 “ have revolted : Carthage is taken, and
 “ they have committed the vilest ravage ;
 “ within the walls and round the country
 “ all is a deluge of blood ; and this hor-
 “ rible confusion is owing to certain pole-
 “ mical zealots, who do not understand
 “ themselves, and of course never can be
 “ reconciled. If the emperor will mix
 “ himself thus in abstract sophistry, and
 “ publish his edicts in support of subtle-
 “ ties which he does not comprehend, let
 “ him put his irrefragable doctors at the

“ head of his armies : for my part I re-
 “ sign : they have driven me beyond all pa-
 “ tience.” Thus that brave man declared
 his sentiments : between ourselves he was
 in the right. There are passions enough
 incident to human nature for the disquiet
 of the world, without having the torch of
 discord lighted up by fanaticism.

And who, enquired the emperor, shall
 quench the flames of discord ?—The nature
 of the human mind will quench the flame,
 returned Belisarius : for casuists will grow
 tired at last of skirmishing about proposi-
 tions men cannot understand, and cavilling
 about distinctions none have leisure to attend
 to. At first indeed, new fangled opinions
 excited curiosity, and that curiosity encour-
 aged the eagerness of disputation. Take
 away from controversy all importance in the
 eyes of the world, and it will soon be out
 of fashion : men in that case will endeavour
 to distinguish themselves by something dif-
 ferent from an idle hypothesis. I compare
 these polemical bigots to a set of champions
 in the public games, who would embrace
 one another in perfect good humour if left
 to themselves ; but being gazed at by the
 multitude, they cut one another's throats.

To avow the truth, said Tiberius, his
 reasonings have almost convinced me.—
 What troubles me, said the emperor, is,
 that upon this system the zeal of a prince
 can render no service to religion.

Heaven

Heaven preserve me, returned Belisarius, from doing that mischief. I leave him the surest means of serving the interests of religion, by making the soundness of his faith appear from the purity of his morals; and by holding forth the tenour of his government as an evidence, and indeed as a pledge for the truth that governs his actions. By making men happy it is easy to make proselytes. A good and upright king has a more powerful empire over the hearts of men, than all the pious friends of persecution collected together. It is indeed easier and more expeditious to cut men's throats than to persuade them: but if bigot kings were to raise their voice to the Most High, with this question, What arms would you have us employ to make you adored upon earth? and if God would deign to make himself heard, the answer would be, **DISPLAY YOUR VIRTUES.**

As soon as the emperor's spirits, which had been much agitated by this enquiry, grew calm again in the silence of retreat, he recalled to mind the maxims and the counsels of the religious sectaries that surrounded him; their enthusiastic violence, their pride, and unrelenting animosity. What a contrast, said he, has Belisarius exhibited! A man grown grey in battle, and yet breathing the sweetness of humanity, meekness, and benevolence! whereas the ministers of the God of peace preach nothing but im-

perious arrogance and implacable rigour ! The old hero is at once pious and just : he loves his God, and wishes to see him adored by all ; he only requires that the adoration offered up should spring from sentiment and free-will. Alas ! I have given way to a false zeal, which, at the bottom, was no better than a rage to tyrannize over the human understanding.

C H A P. XVI.

AS the emperor and Tiberius went the next day to revisit the hero, they encountered a danger which they had not foreseen ; and the glory of delivering them was reserved by Heaven as one triumph more to crown the fame of Belisarius.

The Bulgarians, who had been chased no farther than the foot of the mountains in Upper Thrace, no sooner perceived the country free from their pursuers, than they spread themselves again over the face of the land. One of their detached parties was prowling in quest of prey near the retreat of Belisarius, when a carriage appeared and promised a rich booty. They immediately hemmed it in ; intercepted the two travellers, and made them prisoners. As they

surren-

surrendered all they had without hesitating, the plunderers spared their lives. But for their liberty a ransom, not in their power to pay down, was expected, and therefore they were led along in captivity.

But one way of escaping out of their hands, without being known, occurred to the emperor. Conduct us, said he, to the place whither we were going: there we shall be able to procure the ransom you require. I will answer with my head that you have no surprize to apprehend; and if I break my word, or give you reason to repent confiding in me, I agree to forfeit my life.

The air of candour and majesty with which these words were uttered, made an impression upon the Bulgarians. Whither would you have us lead you? enquired the Bulgarian chief—About six miles off, answered the emperor, to the retreat of Belisarius.—Of Belisarius! what! do you know that illustrious hero?—Most assuredly I do, said the emperor, and I dare count upon him as my friend.—If that be the case, replied the Bulgarian, you need be under no apprehension: we will accompany you thither.

Belisarius, on the first notice of their arrival, imagined they came to carry him off a second time; and his daughter, with tears, with shrieks, and the utmost consternation,

clasped him in her arms, My father, said she, Oh ! my father ! must we part again ?

In this instant word was brought, that the court-yard was filled with an armed force, that stood in formidable ranks round a carriage. Belisarius made his appearance : and the chief of the Bulgarians immediately accosting him, Illustrious hero, said he, here are two men who claim an acquaintance with you, and call you their friend.—What are their names, said Belisarius ?—I am Tiberius, said the young man, and my father is made a prisoner with me.—Oh ! yes, I know them, exclaimed Belisarius ; they are my neighbours, and my good friends. But you that lead them hither, by what right have you laid hands on them ? Who and what are you ? We are Bulgarians, said the chief, and the right of war is our claim. But every thing gives way to the esteem we have for you. We should but ill serve a prince who honours you, if we failed in respect to those whom you acknowledge. Thou wonderful man ! your friends are free, and to you they are indebted for their liberty.

At these words, the emperor and Tiberius made an effort to raise their arms and embrace Belisarius : the hero felt the chains which restrained them ; And how, said he, your hands bound in captivity ! and he untethered them immediately.

Astonish.

Astonishment, joy, surprize, and wonder together rose and throbb'd wildly in the bosom of Justinian. Oh ! virtue, said he to himself, powerful virtue ! what an irresistible empire is thine ! a poor blind old man, surrounded with wretchedness, commands respect from kings ! wrests the sword from the hands of barbarians, and frees from chains the man who——Gracious God ! if the universe beheld the shame that covers me ! Alas ! it would be too mild a punishment !

The Bulgarians were desirous to return the booty they had seized : By no means, said the emperor, keep it all as a gift, and rest assured that I shall also add the ransom we had stipulated.

The Bulgarian chief, in taking leave of Belisarius, asked if he had any commands for the king his master. Tell him it is my constant prayer to heaven, said Belisarius, that so valiant a prince may be the ally and the friend of my sovereign.

Oh ! Belisarius, exclaimed Justinian now recovered from his confusion and surprize, Oh, Belisarius ! what an ascendant have you gained over the hearts of men ! The very enemies of the empire esteem and love you ! —Do not wonder, said the hero with a smile, at the interest I have with the Bulgarians. I am upon good terms with their king ; and but a few days since we supped

together.—Where was that, said Tiberius ?
 —In the king's own tent, replied the hero ;
 I forgot to mention that adventure. As I
 was on my journey hither, I was, like you,
 made a prisoner, and conducted to the bar-
 barbarian camp. Their king gave me a gene-
 rous reception, entertained me handsomely,
 and lodged me for the night under his own
 pavilion : the next day I obtained from him
 a guard, to convey me safe back to the
 place where I fell into the hands of a roving
 party.—How, said Justinian, the king of
 Bulgaria know you, and not detain you with
 him !—He was inclined to do it, returned
 the hero, but his designs and my principles
 did not correspond with each other. He
 talked to me of taking my revenge. Who ?
 I revenge myself ! A mighty cause indeed
 for involving a whole country in flames ! I
 returned him thanks, as you may imagine,
 for the offer of his assistance ; and now, you
 see, he has conceived an esteem for me !

Oh ! what remorse, what eternal bitter
 remorse for the soul of Justinian, said Jus-
 tinian himself, should he ever know to what
 a cruel excess his ingratitude has been car-
 ried ! Where shall he find a friend like you
 whom he has thus basely injured ? Alas ! he
 is unworthy of any man's regard after this
 outrage, this horrible injustice !

Do not exaggerate the matter, returned
 Belisarius ; fester not the wounds of an
 aged

aged emperor, but rather respect his years and his misfortunes. He was surprized into that proceeding against me, and I will give you a little history of that business. There are three remarkable æras in the progress of my ruin. The first was my entry into Carthage. Being master of Gilimer's palace, the use I made of his throne was to convert it into a tribunal of Justice. In so doing, my intention was to give weight and dignity to the laws : my inward sentiment was not legible to common eyes : and when a man seats himself on a throne, he will naturally enough have the appearance of trying how he likes it. That was an indiscretion : but it was not the only one I committed. A very whimsical kind of curiosity prompted me to dine at Gilimer's table, after the fashion of the Vandals, and I was served, in the usual manner of that court, by the officers of the king. It was concluded, that I had a mind to succeed to the vacant throne, and appearances gave some colour to it. A report of this soon reached the imperial palace. In order to counterwork the effect of it, I desired to be recalled, and Justinian recompensed my fidelity by a magnificent triumph. Gilimer, with his wife and children, together with all the accumulated treasure, which for a series of years the Vandals had ravished from the nations round them, adorned the splendid

splendid pomp. The emperor received me in the Circus, and when from the throne, on which he was elevated amidst the acclamations of a people almost without number, he stretched forth his hand to his subject, with that air of majesty and sweetness, my heart exulted within me, and I said to myself: This day's example will be productive of many heroes: Justinian knows the art of kindling emulation and inflaming the mind to glory: the honour of serving him will now be a prize contended for. But alas! the triumph, which was to ensure prosperity to the prince, began already to prepare for me a reverse of fortune! From that very moment Envy stood with her bow bent against me.

A course of victory for five years together, it is true, made it necessary even for Envy to keep some measures of decency: but provoked at last beyond all patience by the success that attended me, she dared to shew herself openly without any sense of shame.

The Goths were chased out of Italy, and had thrown themselves into Ravenna: I laid siege to the place. It was their only refuge; and there pent up, it was impossible for them to escape. Envy whispered to the emperor that Ravenna was impregnable, that his army would all perish before the town, in pursuit of my schemes of vain glory;

glory; and in consequence, when the Goths were upon the point of surrendering, ambassadors from Justinian arrived with proffered terms of peace. I saw that the emperor had been imposed upon, and I thought it would be treachery on my part to lose the opportunity of making Italy our own: I therefore declined to ratify the conditions of peace; the town capitulated, and I was accused of treason and revolt. The charge had some foundation, as you perceive; for I had been guilty of disobedience, and there was still something more in it. The enemy were disaffected to their king, and made me a tender of their crown. A peremptory refusal might embitter their minds; I returned a flattering answer, and that seeming acquiescence was deemed sincere at court. I was recalled, and the prompt obedience with which I laid down the command disconcerted my enemies. To the emperor's feet I led that very Gothic king, whose crown I was said to be ambitious of. This time a triumph was not allowed me. I felt myself sorely mortified on the occasion. I do not mean to say that I was humbled in the sight of the people: far from it: my retinue had sufficient pomp, and the acclamations of the public, who pressed in crowds about me, would have satisfied a more aspiring vanity than mine. But the cold reception I met with
from

from the emperor, more than hinted to me that he was not undeceived, and that a latent suspicion was in secret still at work against me. Unluckily the impression made upon his mind was not a little aggravated by the enthusiastic admiration of the people, whose idol I had the misfortune to be.

And now, in a dispassionate manner, put yourselves in the place of the emperor; consider the prejudices that had been infused into his heart. Should not you have been piqued at the praise which reproached yourself? Do you think the supposed ambition of a subject, extolled to the very skies, would not have given you umbrage? Should you not have seen with spleen and resentment a whole people, wild with joy, and in the transport of their hearts taking revenge against yourself, even to a malice of enjoyment, by giving me a popularity superior to the triumph that had been refused? Could you have shut your ear to the whispers of a court commenting upon the insult offered to majesty, by the tumult of applause that followed Belisarius? My good neighbour, the greatest prince is but mere man; they are all jealous of their power and their splendor; and if Justinian had not had vigour enough to subdue the little passions of his heart, and to pardon the merit which provoked him, it would have been by no means a matter of wonder.

der. And yet the emperor did conquer his jealousies: he controuled the weaknesſes of vanity and ſuſpicion, and once more confiſed to me the command of his armies and the defence of the ſtate. But another incident occurred which gave a byaſs to his judgment, and made me the object of his fixed averſion.

I had finiſhed my career; and Narſes, who ſucceeded me in Italy, alleviated all the pains of my own inactivity by the victories he obtained over the enemies of my country. In this ſituation I imagined I had nothing left but to cloſe the laſt ſcene of life in tranquillity, when of a ſudden the Huns made an irruption into Thrace, and ravaged all the country round. The emperor deigned to recollect that I was ſtill in being, and in my old days I was charged with the command of an expedition, by the event of which the empire was ſaved from ruin. I covered my grey hairs and the furrows of my forehead with an helmet, cruſted over with ten years ruſt. *Fortune proved favourable,

* *Dum interea civitas omnis tumultuando maximum in modum perturbaretur. Belisarius clariffimus olim præfectus, eſſi præ ſenectute in curvitatem jam declinaſſet, mittitur tamen per imperatorem in hoſtes. Et ipſe quidem de ſe, mirâ animi promptitudine, juvenis munera exequabatur. Id namque ultimum illi in vitâ certamen fuit; nec ſane minorem ex eo re tulit gloriam, quam ex Vandalis olim Gothiſque deviſtis. Agathias, lib. 5.*

favourable, and I repulsed the Huns, who were advanced within a few miles of the capital. I laid an ambush for the enemy, and it succeeded so well that I was regarded by the people as a guardian god. The whole city at my return, was one wild uproar of joy and exultation, to such a degree that I was much alarmed at the fatal consequences, which I then foresaw: but how to appease the violence of the populace? The emperor was old, and age brings infirmities with it. The honours paid me by the multitude, and the excess of applause that rung throughout the city, were understood by Justinian as marks of disaffection, plainly indicating that his subjects were tired of his reign, and wished to see him abdicate his throne in favour of the general who defended it. Mistrust and jealousy took possession of him; and without alledging any thing against me, he judged it right to remove so dangerous a man from his presence. While I passed my time in obscurity, a plot against the crown was discovered; and the conspirators, without detecting their principal, died in the agony of torture. But the silence of those unhappy men was interpreted by my enemies, and Calumny furnished out a copious supplement. I was ordered into confinement; discontent spread among all ranks of men, till at length, touched with compassion for all

all my sufferings, the people expressed their feelings without reserve. Pity was soon inflamed to indignation, and by a general revolt the emperor was compelled to give me up to the clamours of my country. In depriving me of my eyes, I am persuaded, he thought he was disarming an enemy. That I was never disaffected to him, heaven can bear me witness: but heaven, that reads the heart of men, has not given that power to princes. You accuse the emperor of ingratitude and injustice; but it was his misfortune, and not his crime, to believe appearances, which perhaps would have misled your judgment in the same manner.

Yes, he is miserable, the most miserable of men, said Justinian, throwing his arms about the hero, and clasping him in his embrace.—What means this burst of anguish? enquired Belisarius.—It is the agony of a heart ready to break, said Justinian: Oh! Belisarius! that unjust master, that barbarous tyrant, who rent your eyes from their sockets, and reduced you thus to misery and want, in bitterness of sorrow and repentance, now embraces you, and throws himself thus upon you with all the compunction of sensibility and love.—Thou my sovereign! exclaimed Belisarius.—Yes, I am he! Oh! my friend! my deliverer! my protector! Yes, thou best of men, yes,
I am

I am that unhappy prince, who has set the world an example of the basest cruelty and ingratitude. Let me thus prostrate at your feet, be humbled to that depth of lowness which my guilt deserves. I here forget my crown, dishonoured as it is by the vilest crimes; I am unworthy to wear it longer. Nothing now befits me, but thus to bathe the dust under your feet with my tears, and hide my opprobrious head, thus overwhelmed with shame and infamy.

And will you thus, said the hero, supporting his master, who was almost suffocated with sighs and tears; and will you thus, said Belisarius, folding the emperor in his arms, abandon yourself to despair? Shall the sense of a past error take away the power of atoning for it? Oh! my master, you are plunging yourself in shame and distraction, as if you were the first man deceived by appearances, and seduced by calumny! Though your error were even a crime, yet why degrade yourself thus? Wherefore be humbled to an abject wretch, a thing vile and abhorred? You are my sovereign still; resume your strength, nor let the recollection of an unguarded moment rob you of a due reverence for yourself, and the true spirit of virtue. In this consternation of your heart, reflect upon all the good you have done mankind,
and

and let that reflection counterballance the mistake of sudden impetuosity. Belisarius is indeed blind; but nations are freed by your patriot toil from the yoke of barbarians; the calamities of the empire are all repaired by your princely beneficence; and thirty years of glorious struggle for the good of mankind have proved to the universe, that Justinian was not a tyrant. Belisarius is blind; but he forgives you: and if you desire to repair the injury you have done him, the means are easy and in your power. Grant me only one of the many prayers and vows I offer up for the peace of the world, and I have full atonement.

Come then, said the emperor, snatching him eagerly to his heart, come, my friend! my genius! and my guide! Oh! come, and teach me to expiate my guilt! Come and exhibit it to my court in all its striking colours: and let your presence, while it is a living memorial of my crime, be a proof of my repentance also.

In vain did the hero use every intreaty to be left in solitude: to appease the anguish of the emperor's mind, he was obliged to comply with his request, and promise to accompany him. The consent of Belisarius thus obtained, Oh! what a debt, said Justinian to Tiberius, what an unspeakable debt do I now owe thee, thou good young man!

man! What recompence can equal thy signal virtues for the service they have done me?—It is true, my sovereign, you are not rich enough, replied Tiberius, to requite me as I wish. Give it in charge to Belisarius to make me retribution. Poor as he is, he is yet master of a treasure which I prefer to all imperial gifts.—My only treasure is my daughter, said Belisarius, and I cannot dispose of her better. With these words the hero called for Eudoxa. My daughter, said he, fall on your knees to your sovereign, and solicit his approbation of your nuptial union with the virtuous Tiberius. At the name and sight of Justinian, the first emotion of nature in the heart of the hero's daughter, was mixed with dread and horror. A sudden shriek burst from her; she started back, and turned aside with detestation. Justinian advanced towards her. Condescend, Eudoxa, said he, to listen to me; deign to look upon me, and you will see a penitent almost drowned in his own tears; in bitter tears that gush from the keenest anguish, and will never dry their channels till I descend in sorrow to my grave. Not this copious stream, not all the good I have done, can blot out the memory of my guilt; but Belisarius has pardoned me; and now, Eudoxa, now prove yourself his daughter, by granting me your forgiveness too.

To

To see the lovely Eudoxa given in marriage to Tiberius, was a degree of consolation to the emperor; and from that moment he felt a dawn of serenity and conscious innocence break in upon his soul.

A more unexpected revolution never disconcerted the intrigues of a court. On the arrival of Belisarius, all was hurry, disorder, and surprise. Behold, said Justinian to the train of courtiers, see here again the hero; behold this upright man, whom you made me persecute to his undoing. From henceforth, ye little spirits, breathe in fear and trembling. His innocence and his virtues are now manifest to me, and your lives are at his disposal. Pale dismay, and grief, and shame, covered every visage. In Belisarius their dastard souls beheld an inexorable judge; they dreaded him as a vindictive and terrible god. The hero continued to support the same modest reserve that adorned him in disgrace. Of his accusers he never deigned to know one; and honoured through the remainder of his life with the emperor's confidence, he made it his study to obtain an amnesty for the passed, and to inspire his master with a vigilant attention to immediate exigencies, and an awful severity to controul all future crimes. But alas! he did not survive long enough for the good of mankind, and the
glory

240 BELISARIUS.

glory of his master. The emperor, quite enfeebled and dispirited in the eve of life, paid the tribute of a tear to the memory of his departed hero; and with that short regret, all the good counsels of Belisarius passed away, and left no trace behind.

F I N I S.



